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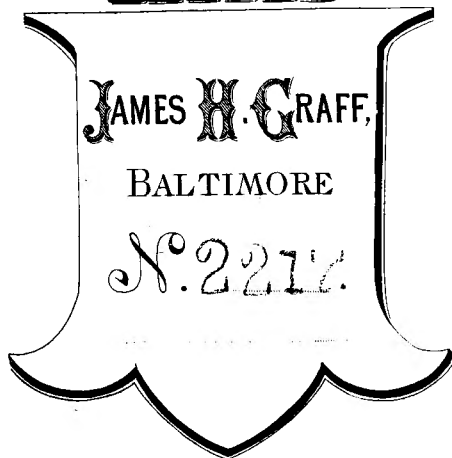
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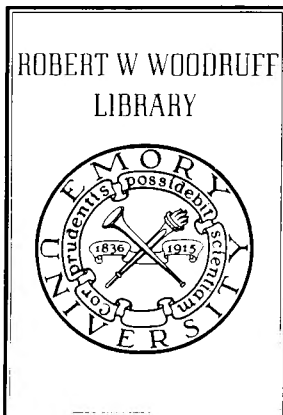
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CHAPTER I.

THE DETACHMENT.

FIVE years ago, we were quartered in the barracks at Berwick-upon-Tweed, and were under orders for foreign service—one rumour said for Gibraltar, another for the Mauritius, and a third for the East Indies *again*.

I remember an evening of one of the last days of April, when the sun was setting, the warning drum had just been beaten for mess, and I was putting on my best uniform, for it was Friday, a day when strangers are usually invited. A smart single knock rang on the door of my room.

"Come in," said I; "who is there?"

"The regimental orders, sir," said a sergeant, appearing, and raising one hand to his forage cap, while, with the other, he proffered the vellum-bound order book of my company.

"Why the deuce did you not come sooner, Edmond? I am just going to mess."

"I beg pardon, sir! but when in the major's quarters, Mr. Langley turned the key outside, and I might have been there yet, if the major had not hailed the mainguard from his window."

"Mr. Langley is always performing some absurd prank," said I, pettishly, while continuing my toilet; "but is there anything fresh to-day?"

"Nothing extra, sir, except that you are detailed for detachment to-morrow, and I am told off for it too."

"For detachment—the devil I am! I am not the first for duty. Langley, de Lancy, and Montague are before me on the roster."

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant, who was ten years older than me, and had snelt powder in Burmah, and at Ferozshah; "but the colonel always wishes to send the *very smartest* officers on detachment."

In no way mollified by the compliment, I seized the order book and read—

"*R.O. Lieutenant Francis Hilton will command the detachment, consisting of one sergeant, two corporals, a drum, fife, and thirty privates, ordered to march to the village of Aikendean, to assist the civil authorities in the preservation of the public peace.*"

"Thank you, Edmond, that will do," said I, as he received the book, saluted again, and withdrew.

"To Aikendean!" thought I; "strange, that of all the twelve lieutenants of the regiment, I should be chosen to go there."

It was my native place, this village of Aikendean, but a place of sad and bitter memories to me!

"Well—I must march, and there is no help for it, Buff," said I, to my servant, a stolid Shropshireman, as I descended the stairs from my quarters towards the mess-room, "pack up my baggage as fast as possible—we are for detachment to-morrow, and leave this by daylight."

Buff raised his hand to his forehead, and heard me with the most perfect imperturbability, for it was quite the same to him, whether we were ordered to Aikendean in Berwickshire, or to Acklin's Island in the Bahamas.

At the mess, I ascertained from O'Hara, our senior major (who was still somewhat wroth for the trick Fred Langley had played him), that in consequence of the riotous proceedings of certain navvies (or navigators) who were employed on a railway in the neighbourhood of Aikendean, the presence of a military force had become necessary for a time.

"I hope you won't find your detachment dull, Hilton," lisped the Honourable Mr. de Lancy, the lieutenant of our grenadiers.

"He is a Berwickshire man," said Montague, "and will be sure to find some one he knows."

"Is it a coursing country?" asked Langley, who was a great sportsman; "do the Buccleugh or Elcho hounds meet in that neighbourhood?"

"You will get a medal with a railway track on it," said O'Hara, before I had time to reply: "and the thanks of the civil authorities—the constable and the parish clerk: pass the sherry, Langley."

"If there are any nice girls in the neighbourhood, when I found make a note of," said Langley, pushing the decanter slides along the table.

"And send their names to the mess for consideration," added De Lancy, whose inveterate lisp completed his blasé air.

"Be sure to add the amount of money, funded or otherwise," said the major, in the same bantering style; "and we may leave the evening parade to take care of itself, and canter across the country to see you, Hilton."

This insipid nonsense continued during dinner, for lack of something better to talk about. I was somewhat dull that evening, and endured many a joke from Langley and O'Hara on my abstraction. I filled my glass every time the decanters passed me, and in the

usual light-hearted merriment of the mess-room strove to drown the old memories that were stealing thick and fast upon me. This was soon observed, and created a fresh source of laughter among the smaller wits of our mess, who undertook to discover which fair damoselle in our country quarters had fascinated me, and I was fined two bottles of claret for being, as they termed it, "absent without leave."

After quitting the mess-room, a few of us repaired, as usual in the routine of that dissipated life which, on such an evening as this, wearied and annoyed me, to a well-known tavern which then stood outside the barrack gate, where we had an oyster supper, and smoked cigars and played at billiards until two in the morning, when they all bade me farewell in the barrack square, with much mock solemnity, for by that time, De Lancy and others were, as Fred Langley phrased it, "at half cock."

In due time, the sweet low notes of the *réveillie*, as the sound of the fifes and roll of the drums stole upon the morning wind, and woke the echoes of the darkened barrack-yard, aroused me, and Buff entered, just as dawn was stealing through the single window of my little room. He was already accoutred, and carried a lighted candle, which he placed on the bare barrack-room table, and, without the least remorse, stood by till I should leave my warm couch after a two hours' sleep.

"The warning bugle has blown, sir."

"I thought I heard it. What like is the morning, Buff—ah—eh?"

"Grey, and very cold, sir."

(Another weary yawn.)

"The men are falling in, sir," he added, looking between the opened shutters.

I sprang from the bed, on which Buff forthwith laid violent hands, and proceeded to roll it completely up in a portable black canvas cover, which had my name and the number of the regiment painted in white letters on the outside. I was soon dressed, even to my sash and belt, and giving a last glance at my scantily-furnished apartment, which contained little more than the orthodox Ordnance allowance of one hardwood table, two ditto chairs, an iron coal-scuttle, fire-irons, bellows, and candlestick, in addition to various chests and iron-bound trunks, I hurried to the mess-room, swallowed a cup of hot coffee by candle-light, lit a cigar, and repaired to the parade-ground, where Sergeant Edmond, and old Allen, our sergeant-major, an indefatigable non-commissioned officer, who never seemed to sleep, either by day or by night, were parading my detachment in the cold grey dawn, under the shadow of the governor's house (which is used as officers' quarters), and just as the clock of a church which stands opposite struck the hour of four.

The men were all in heavy marching order, with coats rolled on the tops of their knapsacks and every man carried in his pouch forty

rounds of ball ammunition, for the benefit of the obstreperous Paddies who were at present located in Aikendean.

With a cart for our baggage, which was entrusted to Buff and a lance-corporal, we marched out, and with our single drum and fife before us, making all the music they might, left the town by the Scottish gate, and passing the liberties of Berwick, took the road towards Foulden. We had before us a twenty-miles' march across the Merse, almost to the borders of Haddingtonshire, near which lay the place of our destination.

On leaving the town, the fifer slipped his pipe into the leathern case that hung beside his sword; the little drummer slung his brass drum on his back; I gave the order to "*March at ease*;" and conversing and singing, my light-hearted men trod as merrily on as if all the fertile Merse was their own; while the bright sun came up from the sea behind us, and tipped with yellow light the spires and towers of Berwick, with its castle, a mass of ruins now, with a windmill rising from their centre. From among the rich meadows the flowers lifted up their dewy heads, and the fresh earth glistened in the bordering fields; on hedge-row and poplar the red buds were bursting into bright green leaves; the rivulets and "wee burnies" by the roadside gurgled along in limpid purity; the black crows were wheeling aloft in circles; the ploughmen, in their blue bonnets and vests of scarlet plush, were whistling along the rigs; the voice of the merle came out of the leafless woods, and the honey-bee floated over the dewy grass, or buried itself in the "craw-flower's early bell." Everything spoke to me of home, of spring, and joys departed—

"Departed to return nae mair,"

as I marched along in rear of my detachment, and welcomed, but with a sigh, each well-known and old familiar feature of that dear landscape, on which I had not looked for six long years; and this made me remember that I was then four and twenty.

On leaving in our rear the fertile Merse, with its cultivated enclosures and rich fertility, which make it so like one vast and beautiful garden, those pastoral hills through which the Whitadder wanders to the Tweed, began to rise before us, and the features of the country became still more familiar to me.

I knew every nook of yonder tower that crowned the height which the sheep were dotting, and had often risked my life to rob the owl's nest at that shattered window, from which the dark green ivy hung like a curtain of leaves. I knew the cairn that lay in the hollow below, beside the whimpering burn, for there a brave mosstrooper slept; and I knew the grey Standing-stone on the Corn-rigs, that marked where the fairies danced at Halloween, and where a Scottish victory had been won. I recognised the deep dark pool of the lonely Whitadder, where the water-kelpie beguiled to death a weary traveller; and the lonelier glen where the six martyrs lay, among the purple moss and waving fern; for many a time and oft had my poor mother taken me

to see where the gowan and the blue-bell grew above the covenanters' graves—the graves of those brave hearts who died for Scotland's kirk and liberty.

On the wind that waved the feathery ash and birchen trees old voices came back to my ear, and the kind faces of those who had loved me rose in fancy before my eye; but in fancy only! for never more would those kind faces turn to mine, or their voices bid me welcome. My only friends were the green hills, where the sheep and the kyloes grazed under the eyes of the plaided shepherds; the rocky bank where the thick coppice overhung the brawling ford; the green holly lanes, that led to old thatched cottages, to ruined towers, or haunted chapels, and all that spoke to me of home, and my own Scottish borderland.

This is but a melancholy beginning for a rambling story of military loves and adventures, so I must hasten on, lest my readers become impatient.

As I had given my men a long halt by the way, that they might dine with ease and comfort, the sun was setting when we approached the pretty village of Aikendean, lying in a deep and secluded hollow, through which there flows a tributary of the Whitadder. The ruthless engineers of the railway (it was some great junction line) had destroyed much of its seclusion, and rified it of half its rural charms. In one place a horrid skew bridge, of red bricks and yellow stone, spanned the beautiful glen; in another, the lovely hazel banks had been irreparably ruined by a deep and rugged *cutting*, the earth from which had been hurled into the glen, to form a mound beside the martyrs' graves; and near the moss-trooper's tower clustered the wigwams of the Irish colony we had come to keep in order.

But far down that wooded hollow, embosomed among the oaks from which it took its name—old patriarchal oaks, whose drooping branches swept the stream they darkened—lay Aikendean, with its little street of thatched or red-tiled cottages; its ancient bridge and inn, with the sign of a "Bold Dragoon" creaking on an iron rod; its pretty manse, with yellow blinds and blue slates, and with the woodbine and china roses clambering up its chimneys; the little school-house, with its copper bell still dangling at the gable, and the hum of small voices stealing through its windows; and last of all, the venerable kirk, which good King David built in the days of old—with its black pulpit, in which Renwick preached and Peden prophesied, and its stone spire and little burying-ground, where all the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" slept. The voices of the children were as familiar as the clear clink of the smith's anvil, and I could almost have cried "*Halt!*" as a turn of the long green village lane brought all this before us; for in that manse I was born; under its dear roof my father and mother had died, and they were sleeping now in that kirkyard, where many a good minister lay; in that school-house I had first spelled my way, with the aid of a forefinger, through the "Child's Ladder," and learned to steal the old dominie's jargonelles

that grew in the garden behind; over that bridge I had fished for many a year; and by that inn door I had heard the old Scots Grey, its landlord, tell many a tale of Picton and of Ponsonby—of the shout of "*Scotland for ever!*" that rang among the towers of Hougoumont, and of the last grand charge at Waterloo, till the young blood boiled within me.

The drummer slung his drum, the hum ceased in the ranks, and the muskets were sloped, as we marched down the lane into the little village, where our arrival created a tremendous sensation. The smith forsook his hammer, the weaver his loom, and the gudewives their knitting-needles and spinning-wheels. The school where the dominie was teaching the children the *Auld Hundredth* was evacuated in an instant; and the younger fry forsook their occupation of kneading mud pies and dancing in the gutter, to stare at the soldiers. I saw the venerable dominie standing at the half-door of his school-house, with horn spectacles on nose, and the old landlord of the "Scots Grey" hurrying out, bareheaded, for he had pricked up his ears at the rattle of the drum, and his eyes glistened with a kindly expression at the sight of the old red coat, as I drew up the *forces* before his door, and, halting my command of thirty rank and file, turned to look for the civil authority we had come to "assist,"—the village constable.

He approached me, bonnet in hand; and I knew him well—old Roger Baillie—though he now wore the blue uniform of the Scottish rural police,—but without recognition; for five years' service in India had deeply browned and sorely altered me. I was taller and stouter; my hair had become darker, almost black; and then my uniform was a complete disguise. He never recognised me; yet many a time I had ridden on Roger's back, and thrown kail castocks down his chimney, robbed his solitary apple-tree, and almost smoked him to death on a Hallow een night.

I did not make myself known to any one, for reasons which will be shown in the sequel; and yet every gazing face was as familiar to me as my own.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOMINIE.

THE soldiers were billeted on the villagers, who all made them welcome with that friendship for military men which the Scots have ever evinced; and the great parochial authority, Roger Baillie, offered me free quarters at the inn, but I declined, preferring, for the sake of the landlord and other times, to sojourn there at my own expense.

"Well, landlord," said I, as old Crupper ushered me along the sanded passage towards his best parlour, with smiles of welcome on his weatherbeaten face, "I suppose you seldom have soldiers among you here in Aikendean."

"No, sir, yours are the first I've seen for many a long year, and glad I am to see them, sir. I have worn the red-coat myself, sir,—been in the auld Scots Greys, and fought in Sir William Ponsonby's brigade, the second corps at Waterloo. A *het* day that, sir; there is our last charge, and Sergeant Ewart, of my troop, taking the Eagle," he added, pointing to an old engraving, which I remembered well. Opposite hung two other engravings of local celebrities, Sir John Hope of Pinkey, in yeomanry uniform, holding his horse by the bridle, and Ramsay of Barnton, the M.P., with whip in hand, and that peculiar hat on his head now known in Scotland as a "Barnton scraper."

Old Crupper dusted the chairs and tables with his apron, blew up the newly lighted fire; visits of guests were evidently as scarce as those of angels at Aikenhead, and, on my hinting that it seemed so,

"True, sir," said Crupper, with a sigh, "it's all the doing of that devilish railway that takes everything past the village, and has brought the value of property down to the worth of a day's pay."

"What can I have for supper," I asked, unbuckling sword and sash, which Crupper received, and viewed with lively satisfaction and respect.

"I havena had a sword in my hand, sir, these four and twenty years and mair! Supper, sir? we have a cold beefsteak-pie, some nice salmon, fresh frae the Tweed."

"Bravo, Crupper," said I, "then let me have both, with a couple of bottles of your best sherry; and I should like the favour of your company to supper, and pray ask the old dominie whether he will join us, if not better engaged."

"Your honour is most,—is most exceedingly kind," said the pensioner, raising a hand to his wrinkled brow.

"Not at all, my friend, but I hate being alone in the evening."

"Aye, after being used to the splendid mess, sir, I daresay it wont come natural," replied Crupper, who seemed overwhelmed by the honour done him, and hurried away to invite the dominie, and have supper prepared, while Edmond, my sergeant, appeared at the door to report that "the men were in their billets, and that all was right."

"Very good," said I, "let them parade before the inn at the usual hour to-morrow, eleven; see that none leave the village without permission, and that all are ready to turn out by day or night at a moment's notice."

I remembered well this parlour of the village inn, with its old-fashioned and well-kept furniture, which had been made "when George the Third was king;" the eight-day clock still ticked monotonously in a corner, everything was just as I had seen it last, and *Brown's Self-interpreting Family Bible*, with *Cruden's Concordance*, *Baxter's Saint's Rest*, and the *Cloud of Witnesses* (four books to be found in every Scottish cottage), were still upon the sideboard, surmounted by the cracked punch-bowl, and stucco parrot painted

red and yellow. The fire burned cheerfully in the grate, two wax-candles were placed on a spotless tablecloth, a servant lass, clad in a blue skirt and clean red-striped jacket, with short sleeves and braided hair, laid the supper-table, with a coy expression on her rosy face, as if she fully expected some "daffin" or gallant speeches from the young officer, whose brilliant trappings glittered brightly to her unaccustomed eyes; but far other thoughts were in my mind, and I was only roused from my long reverie by a shuffling of heavy shoes and gaitered feet, together with the voice of Crupper, saying,

"Sir, it is the dominie."

Hastening from my chair, I grasped the old man's proffered hand. I think that I see him yet, as he stood before me there, poor old Dominie Denholm, with his hat raised from his bald head, which was edged by a few white hairs, and with a kind and gratified expression on his anxious and somewhat careworn face. He had donned his Sunday coat and a clean white cravat, in honour of my unexpected invitation, and I saw with sorrow that the good man's garments were rather the worse of the wearing; for the whole allowance he received, though a finished classical scholar, was somewhere about thirty pounds per annum, the rent of his little cottage, a cow's maling, and the use of half an acre, which of old had been gifted to light the lamps at the shrine of St. David in the adjacent kirk. The many tricks I had played him in other times floated before me, and I remembered how often I had imitated his learned quotations and quaint mode of giving out the psalms when my father preached in the pulpit above his precentor's desk. He was my first and best preceptor, and a kind old man, to whom my heart warmed; but I still resolved to preserve my incognito.

"Welcome, Mr. Denholm," said I, "be seated, and landlord please to be seated also."

"Many, many thanks, sir, for this kind invitation," replied the dominie, seating himself, without recognising me, for his eyes wandered over the gold epaulettes, blue facings, and gold lace of the "Queen's Own," such trappings, or "frillery," as he no doubt deemed them, being strange and unusual to a man of peace like him.

"Wont you take a glass of wine before supper, Mr. Denholm?"

"I thank ye kindly, sir—no; I never taste wine but at sacrament time, or whiles at a baptism." (How could he otherwise, poor man, on thirty pounds per annum?) "I take a cup of milk dashed wi' whiskey for supper, as I sup early."

"Like the old Romans, eh?" said I, with a smile

"Even sae, sir, but not for the reason given by Pliny and Juvenal, that it was esteemed *luxurious* to sup early."

"Then you will take a nip of our native mountain dew?"

"Thank you, sir, but not yet. Our native, said ye; then you are a Scotsman, sir?"

"My name might tell you that, Dominie, if my tongue did not."

"But ye speak like an Englishman, sir."

"Custom, Dominie, all custom. Landlord, will *you*"—

"Thank you, sir, the smallest drop in life."

This measure meant a full glass, which the old Grey tossed off, without once winking, saying,

"Your very good health, sir, 'the Queen's Own,' too, and quick promotion, sir."

I returned the compliment, by drinking to his health, with that of the old Scots Greys, and then we sat down to supper, like old friends, as we were, though they knew it not. The salmon was excellent, the cold pie unexceptionable, the sherry ditto, and pure as amber; but whether it was the dominie's natural reserve and diffidence, or whether it was that my uniform impressed the landlord with respect, I know not; but I had most of the talking to myself, until the wine began to loosen their tongues. The cloth was then removed by Jeanie, and more sherry was ordered, with the more favoured whiskey toddy and clay pipes for the dominie and landlord.

The latter had made several inquiries about my regiment, when it had returned from foreign service, when it expected to go abroad again, and then he remembered that he "had seen them last in solid square at Waterloo."

The dominie hinted about the advantage of schoolmasters for the army, and told me the doleful and well-remembered story of his son's enlistment in the Auld Black Watch, and what a heart-breaking affair it was to him and his gudewife; in short, neither said a syllable or told a story that I had not heard a hundred times before; yet it was strange the interest with which all these little nothings became invested now.

"Pray, landlord," said I, "make yourself at home,—fill, here is sherry, and there the native; assist me in making the dominie *fu*."

"Fu!" responded Mr. Crupper; "I've kent the dominie for fifty years now, and never saw him fu', or a hair of his coat turned, yet."

"What, is Mr. Denholm so seasoned a cask?"

"Na, na, but he is owre wary a carl," replied the landlord, whose natural *Scottish* came more and more upon him as the hot toddy loosened his tongue.

"Your health, sir," said the schoolmaster, drinking to me. "I am most happy to see you here, Captain—Captain—"

"Hilton," I suggested;—thinking, 'the devil's in it, if the old man does not know me now!'—"but, unfortunately, I am not a captain yet."

"Captain Hilton, (ye are a' captains in Scotland), most happy indeed I am to see you, in mair ways than one; for we have had a terrible time of it here wi' these weary Irish creatures, since that ill-advised railroad came through this peaceable country."

"Fine men, the Irish, though, Dominie," said the landlord; "did you ever see the Connaught Rangers in heavy marching order? We *once* had an Irishman, a trumpeter——"

"They are wild, camstrairy creatures," continued the dominie; "and every wage-day has been a day o' riot and bloodshed that bring disgrace on this Christian country, sir; for they make love to the lasses in open daylight, and lick their sweethearts, and auld Roger Bailie, the constable, too; they burned down their whiskey-booth on St. Patrick's day, and now they are swearing to set both kirk and manse in a blaze next, because it pleased our minister, the Reverend Mr. Macclatter,—rashly, I must say,—to preach a bitter sermon last Sabbath anent the mass, and make an offer of the kirk for a night to a certain Father Gavazzi for a lecture anent the English cardinal."

"There have been many changes here of late, I presume, Mr. Denholm?"

"Ca' me dominie, if you please, sir; for naebody Maisters me here," replied the schoolmaster, while brewing his third tumbler, and while the landlord, who was bursting with impatience to say something more about the Greys and Waterloo, was smoking with great vigour, and sitting very erect. "Changes! aye, changes there have been, indeed, since I was a halfling callant, in Aikendean. The auld minister, Maister John Hilton (worthy man!); my faither, his first precentor; the auld sexton, and two cottars who wore blue bonnets, grey coats with great square skirts and cuffs, and kneebreeks, with their wives and bairns, were all the population in the kirk-town, though, like many another place, it was a thriving burgh-town, with its provost and council, before that ill-advised Union. But now it is thriving again; for there are four-and-twenty families in it. In my young days there was but one shop, where everything was sold, from a penny whistle to a cart-saddle; the smith was our doctor and dentist; we had neither grocer, innkeeper, nor baker; fleshier nor haberdasher; for then we supped porridge to breakfast, kail at dinner, and sowans at supper. We baked our ain bannocks and scones; we were contented wi' little and canty wi' mair, while illness and anger were kent but by name: *now*, we maun hae loaf-bread, and tea or coffee twice daily, wi' roast and boiled for dinner. Then, we wore our ain bonnets, mauds, and galligaskins, and homespun coats o' hoddengrey; but *now*, sir, ye see another sight! for nothing will serve us but broadcloth of the best kind, hats like chimney cans, wi' pantaloons and blucher boots. In those days, there never came a letter but twice a year to the minister, one being frae the Presbytery of Dunse or Synod of Teviotdale, anent the Assembly; and another for him to dine wi' the laird when he came from Edinburgh: *now*, we have a penny-stamped bushel of them every week. A man in those days became a ploughman or a smith, like his father before him; but now, sir, they are brought up to be gentlemen, and must be advocates and writers to the Signet; so, sir, at the present hour, we have more than one puir shopkeeper's son a senator of the College of Justice; but wi' a' that, there are mair evil, discontent, devilry, and drunkenness, even in this wee glen, in

three days, than would have served for a' Teviotdale fifty years ago. All the plagues o' Egypt are among us now! But the times are changing fast, and puir degraded auld Scotland maun c'en change wi' the times. Truly, as Cowper saith, 'God made the country, and man made the town.'"

The dominie sighed as he thought of other years, and the landiord was just beginning—

"I mind, sir, when I enlisted in the Greys——"

"That was the first gude the parish saw for many a long day, John," said the Dominie, smiling.

"You are an impudent auld body to say so; but I mind, Dominie, that *you* were the first to welcome me back."

"Because, although my wildest scholar, John, you had become a brave Scots dragoon, and fought for your country; because I am aye glad to see the face of an auld friend, and loe a' the countryfolk as though they were my ain bairns. But, Captain——"

"I assure you, I am only a lieutenant, Mr. Denholm."

"Just sae, sir; but may I take the liberty of asking if you are any relation of the late worthy minister here, Maister John Hilton?"

"A very near relation, indeed," said I, while my heart beat fast at the question. "I was just about to ask you for some information. I believe the poor old gentleman is dead?"

"Yea, sir," said the dominie, sighing again, and bowing his white and venerable head, even to his own thoughts, with something of that religious reverence which is so beautiful among the Scottish peasantry; "yea, sir, gone the way *we must all go*; for, as the blessed Psalmist sayeth, 'Man's days are as grass—as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.' Many a time and oft have I heard him expound on those beautiful lines; but nothing remains to us of our auld minister now, but his grave beside the kirkyard wa', and even that seemed flat and sunken when I looked on it yesterday."

There was something so pathetic in this good man's attachment to my father's memory, that it moved me deeply, and my heart swelled as he spoke. After a pause, he added—

"He was the last of the Hiltounes of that ilk."

"Who dwelt in the auld Peel, at the Braehaid, yonder," said the old Grey. "A reiving set they were, i' their time. There was a Cornet Hilton, of our's, shot at Waterloo, just after Sergeant Ewart——"

"Hoot, gudeman," said the dominie, testily, "the gentleman wants to hear about our old minister, and not that weary charge and the eagle that a' the world, forbye the countryside, ken o'!"

"Had not Mr. Hilton a scampish son—called Francis or Frank?" he asked, with the utmost confidence.

"Dinna miscal the young man, sir," replied the pedagogue, "for he was a good lad—there was not a better in the parish o' Aikendean."

nor in St. Bathans nor Buncle to boot; but alack, sir, as Sir Walter Scott sayeth, 'women and gear are at the bottom o' a' the mischief in this world;' and thus it was by one of these sources of evil that the parish lost puir Mr. Frank, and that his father's heart was broken."

"Indeed! landlord, fill your glass and pass the bottle; dominie, make another browst, and pray let me hear this terrible story."

"Well, sir," replied the old schoolmaster, as he fixed his eyes first on the sanded floor and then on a crack in the ceiling, while endeavouring to recal all the stray fragments of a narrative; "I can tell you all about poor Mr. Frank's misadventure, for I heard it partly from the lad himself, partly from the butler at Fairy Bank, and partly from the minister before he died."

"You saw old Mr. Hilton die?" said I, making a violent effort to control my emotion.

"Yes, sir—rest and bless him, God! I saw him die, and these two hands helped to lower him into his narrow bed—but of that more anon."

I listened, while the story of my early life and first love was thus related, and with marvellous accuracy, by my old friend, the dominie.

CHAPTER. III.

THE MINISTER'S SON.

"It was in the church of St. Clair, at Avignon, at the hour of six in the morning, that Petrarch first beheld the sweet face of Laura, with all her locks of gold—so it was in our auld kirk down the glen, at the evening sermon, that my young friend, Mr. Frank, first saw Miss Cecil Marchmont."

"This is a most poetical beginning, Dominie!" said I, almost amused by the inflated style adopted by the old village pedagogue.

"Well sir, it was just about the evening service, and I was giving out that beautiful psalm which beginneth—

'How lovely is thy dwellingplace,
O Lord of Hosts, to me'—

when I saw in one of the pews a grey-haired, military-looking gentleman, about fifty years of age, dressed in a blue surtout, frogged with black braid, with his grizzled whiskers trimmed into the corners of his mouth, and his hair cut short; his gait stiff, upright, and his bearing somewhat haughty. By his side was a fair young creature, evidently his daughter, and just turned of seventeen years, if she was indeed so much; she was dressed in the prettiest of little summer bonnets with white roses within it, and round her black and braided hair. Her face was pale, but pure and healthy, and there was a soft tinge like a pink-rose leaf, stole over her cheek at times. Her eyes were a deep dark blue, with a sweet and modest expression.

Verily sir, there was a divine grace in every feature and over all her form; her hands, cased in their yellow kid gloves, were small and pretty; her voice when she joined in the psalm charmed me like that of a little bird. Oh sir, she was all that a Burns might sing of, a Wilkie might paint, or a lover could wish!"

"Bravo, Dominie!" cried the old Grev, permitting a loud laugh and a volume of smoke to leave his wide mouth together; "spur him on, captain, spur him on!"

"The whole parish were on tiptoe to learn who they were; and the gossips at the post-house were not long in discovering that the military stranger was a Colonel Marchmont, of the Bombay Army, who had returned to Berwickshire, after a long residence in the sickly East; and that when there, between fighting with the Burmese, plundering the rajahs and planting indigo, he had realized a splendid fortune, and taken a life-long lease of the manor house at Fairy Bank, about a mile up the glen; one of the sweetest places in the Merse, where the river banks in summer are sheeted with the blossoms of the white gueldre roses, and where the gnarled oaks grew thick and dark over rock and scaur.

"The minister dined with the colonel at Fairy Bank; and then the colonel dined with the minister at the manse; but though they were the only persons in the parish who by station and education were fitted to become companions, their acquaintanceship went little farther; for the colonel could speak of nothing but Bombay, Sepoys, and Rajeputes, curries, long marches, elephants, tigers, howitzers and camel batteries; and having been all his life accustomed to bully the poor black fellows, he was a terror to all the servitors of Fairy Bank, and all the parish weans to boot. And moreover, though he had come to kirk on his first arrival, it was mere unboly curiosity, for he had a horror of Presbyterianism and was aye foretelling its downfall, though he was born where its greatest pillar first saw the light, in the Giffordgate of Haddington; and so being nothing in particular, the colonel concluded that he was an episcopalian.

"Now since the death of his wife, our minister, douce man! had led a life of the utmost quietness and seclusion, and spent his whole leisure time in rearing and educating his only son Frank for the kirk of Scotland, in the hope that he would become his assistant in his old age, and his successor, when it pleased the Lord to give him a call to the Land of Promise; thus the stormy conversation of the Sepoy colonel was as displeasing as his curries and Indian pickles which were hot as living coals; and he swore at his black servants in English, Scottish and Hindostanee, after a fashion that made every silver hair in our poor minister's head arise on end."

"He was a fine man the colonel; and knew well the points of a horse," said the landlord, refilling his pipe.

"Had he kent the leaves of his Bible, it might have been better for him noo, John! Our minister was an incarnation of all human kindness and virtue; yet when his kirk or kirk matters were in-

terfered with, he was pugnacious as the great Knox himself; thus after having a peppery argument with the colonel anent state-kirks, their friendship was nipped in the bud, and then there ensued between them a coolness that ended in positive dislike, on the colonel's side, at least.

"In this unhappy state of matters the young people—Master Frank and the sweet Miss Cecil—had no share as you may readily imagine; and the colonel finding that unlike the quiet old minister, his son could clear the highest fences in the country at a flying leap, and reduce to submission the most unruly horses; that he was a good shot, and knew all the mysteries of bait and fly-fishing, and could lead him to the deepest salmon pools in the Tweed, and the best trout holes in the Whitadder, made him always a welcome guest at Fairy Bank, where for hours in the evening he endured the colonel's prosy stories, of how with a squadron of Bombay cavalry and two camel guns he had plundered all the Rajah of Curriebad's territory; how Ensign Augustus Algernon Giblets, of the First Native Infantry, had been gobbled up, bones and all, by an alligator; how forty men had died under one stroke of the sun on the march to Shalapour, and as many more were devoured by three hundred tigers that rushed out of a jungle at once; of lacs of rupees, of punkahs, palanquins and Heaven knows what more; together with the nightly account of the great siege of Bhurtpore, and his desperate hand to hand encounter with Durjan Sal the usurping Rajah, from whose cimitar he got '*this* damnable cut over the right ear,' and won the grand cross of the Bath, with the order of the Doorance Empire.

"All these everlasting stories told in the same way and nearly in the same words, were listened to and endured by Mr. Frank with cheerfulness, for he always deemed himself more than rewarded by the intervals which permitted him to sit beside Cecil at the piano, to turn over the leaves of her music and join her in a song; to assist the gardener in training her roses, and in botanizing with her along the river side; for the young lady was a great collector of plants, and had brought home with her from Bombay a fine collection, for which Mr. Frank (with *my* assistance) gave her all the Latin names.

"Now, sir, you may easily guess the end of this kind of friendship between a fine enthusiastic and high spirited youth verging on nineteen, and a beautiful young girl who had received every accomplishment that wealth, talent, and natural grace could give her. As Dryden saith—

'In hell, and earth, and seas, and heaven above,
Love conquers all, and we must yield to love!'

"In this sweet intercourse a year stole away, and the young pair were as deeply in love with each other as it is possible for a pair of young dreamers to be at the gentle dawn of life, when all the world is new and bright and fair to look upon. They were engaged; they had exchanged rings, locks of hair and the prettiest

letters (for it was my good fortune to see some of them), and all this time, although the whole village was assured they would 'be man and wife;' and that Fairy Bank with its lawn, stables, garden, hothouse, plate, wine-cellar, horses, carriages and fine furniture, would be a *grand dounsitting* for our minister's son, the auld minister himself never suspected the matter, and still less did the colonel; who, when he was not fishing in the Tweed or besieging Bhurtport, was generally reading the 'East India Gazette' and the 'Stock Lists,' or dozing a way his time with the amber tube of a hookah in his mouth.

"I am considered a good performer on the violin, so when the colonel gave a ball, which he always did on the anniversaries of Bhurtport or that other desperate business at Curriebad, I was invited to assist in making sweet music for the dancers. Then it was a sight indeed, when the magnificently furnished double-drawing-room at Fairy Bank was lighted, to see the beautiful Cecil in her rich ball dress, resplendent with loveliness, youth, vivacity and costly jewels; and none who saw her thus would have believed in Milton's opinion of beauty when unaided being 'adorned the most.'

"A crowd of gay but hollow-hearted and empty-headed young fellows followed her, as moths follow the light, while one timid but truer lover—yea, one who would have laid his life at her feet, Mr. Frank, stood at a distance, and sighed when reflecting that he was only a poor minister's son, and would soon have to return to college and resume the prosy study of divinity for which he had neither taste nor vocation; he sighed, with anger too, when she leant on another's arm, or when another's hand encircled her in that voluptuous waltz, which by the way of Italy hath come down to us from the unholy orgies of Bacchus, and should be banished from the kingdom of Scotland and every Christian country, as only fit for Russians and Turks.

"Master Frank adored her! he loved that lassie's very shadow—yea, the perfume that floated about her presence was to him intoxication; he would kiss the fan that hung at her wrist, and gather up the flowers that had fallen from her bouquet—yea, though they were faded and withered, for his passion had reached that degree when it becometh a species of delightful idolatry. We cannot apply a cold rule to the warm impulses of a young and ardent heart, and 'tis well; for assuredly it hath many a charm for its votaries this same unhappy thing called love.

"For a year and more they had lived in a realm of dreams, for this indeed is the purest of love, when the heart is young and guileless and the object of its adoration seems the first being on earth, and second only to its Maker! But it is the old story of true love, and its crooked and thorny ways, for their dark hour of evil was at hand.

"The colonel conceived the idea of turning a wing of the mansion at Fairy Bank into a Puseyite chapel an innovation which set the

whole countryside astir, and caused a meeting of the synod of Teviotdale. He brought a certain Mr. Priestly, a clerical dandy from Oxford, to officiate there; and this person prayed in white lawn sleeves, and preached in black, and had twa wee laddies with shirts over their clothes to follow him from the door to the pulpit, and from the pulpit to the door; he had two candles set upon an altar, and an oaken eagle to bear up his Bible stood on one side of the chancel, and a stone font for holy water stood on the other; a cross, which we called Beelzebub's Hammer, stood on the rood screen; Mr. Priestly turned to the east when he prayed, and to the west when he hid his face in his perfumed pocket-handkerchief; there were many who averred he made the sign of the cross; Miss Cecil played the organ, the colonel puffed with the bellows, and Ali Baba, the black servant, jowed the bell that hung in the gable neuk. The whole parish of Aikendean declared that such ongoings had not been seen in the realm of Scotland since popery and prelacy were dung down by the Revolution Settlement, and that farce called the Treaty of Union.

"Parish meetings were held in my school-house anent this new and startling innovation, and the jangling of the chapel bell at Fairy Bank morning and evening sounded as an abomination in the ears of all in Aikendean, when a climax was put to the intrusion by a polite letter arriving from the colonel's chaplain, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Hilton, begging that the bell in the parish church might not be rung so *very* long on Sunday, as it disturbed *his* congregation, which consisted only of the colonel's household and a few of the neighbouring lairds, who, deserting the church of their fathers, had followed the fashionable creed that Renwick, Peden, and Cameron preached against in the ages of darkness and trouble. But the impudence of this request coming, as it did, direct from the enemy's camp was not to be borne, sir—we were Scotsmen—we were Presbyterians, and resolved to grapple with the foe!

"John, the minister's man, dressed in his best black, was immediately dispatched from the manse to assemble the elders and kirk session in the vestry, where, after prayer, we held a solemn council anent what was to be done; and it was resolved on the motion of Mr. Wadset, the writer, our ruling elder, to apply to the sheriff, in form of law, under an act of the Scottish Parliament, for a warrant to remove the bell from Mr. Priestly's chapel. The warrant was of course granted, and as no bells but those of the Presbyterian Established Kirk can be rung lawfully in this our auld kingdom of Scotland, armed with all the powers of the law, Roger Baillie the constable, with the whole village at his heels, marched boldly to Fairy Bank, and with the help of Geordie Trowel the mason, and Bauldy Brume the sweep, unhooked the obnoxious bell from the gable neuk; and it was carried in triumph to the Market-cross of Greenlaw, and there sold in public roup, by tuck of drum, to pay Mr. Wadset's fees and expenses!

"It was a glorious victory for our minister, but a terrible affront to the colonel! He swore like a pagan that he would burn the parish kirk to the ground-stone, that he would never forget or forgive it; he dismissed the porter who admitted us, and in his rage flung Ali Baba's turban into the fire. It was worse a thousand times than being sabred by Durjan Sal, or being dinner for an alligator like Ensign Giblets.

"The sins of fathers were visited on the children.

"Poor Mr. Frank was forbidden the house, and then by his daughter's grief and dejection, the colonel discovered *her* secret; he ransacked her desk as he had done the territories of Curriebad; and the result was, that all Mr. Frank's presents, letters, locks of hair and other etcetera were returned to the manse with a cold and contemptuous note in Cecil's handwriting. This note was no doubt written by the puir lassie to her father's dictation, for I am assured that she was all candour, goodness, and innocence—yea, she was charitable even to a fault, otherwise she could never have submitted to the million whimwhams of the old nabob her father; but every word of that compulsory letter sank like a stab from a Hielandman's dirk into the poor lad's heart. He became wretched and miserable. Wounded pride and disappointed love struggled hardly and bitterly for mastery over the more tender convictions of his heart; and he wandered day and night near Fairy Bank, like an Adam near his Eden, in the hope of meeting Cecil and hearing his fate from her own dear lips; but Cecil was never to be seen beyond the precincts of the garden, the conservatory, or the lawn.

"At last we heard that the Honourable Charles Fetlock, a captain of Dragoon Guards, from the barracks at Piershill, was residing at Fairy Bank, and now everybody said that *he* was to be Miss Cecil's intended spouse. Through my services as violinist, I had many opportunities of seeing this young son of Mars.

"He was a handsome and dashing fellow, with a well bronzed face, a heavy thick moustache and a gallant air; but, oh, he had a devilish grey-eye, that all our village shrunk from. He dressed in the newest and most exquisite fashion; he had a fortune far above mediocrity and an intellect far below it; but if he had a small amount of brains, he had at least plenty of well curled hair over them. He was a great judge of horseflesh, and attended the Duke of Buccleugh's hounds at every meet; he could play on the piano and guitar, and sang only Italian songs, for he had a proper contempt for everything Scottish and English too; he shone in the polka, and was supreme in smalltalk, for he could converse, as he believed, on everything, from bombarding a city, to the fashion of the newest bonnet.

"This superb fellow could never have conceived it possible that a young provincial like our minister's son could be his rival, and of course the suspicion would never have entered his well curled head, had not his long-bodied and short-legged groom, English Bill, heard the secret at the alehouse, and mentioned it. The captain then

remembered that he *had* seen a young fellow prowling about the avenue and other places near Fairy Bank.

"Does he wear a short plaid shooting-jacket, a blue-silk necktie, a Glengarry bonnet and leathern gaiters?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bill, 'with a shot-belt over his shoulder and double-barrelled gun.'

"Then whip the fellow off, and if that wont make him march, Bill, come for me.'

"Yes, sir," replied Bill, who thought of the double-barrelled gun, and resolved, as he walked away like a pair of crooked compasses, to leave the matter in the captain's own hands.

The dragoon guardsman had asked Miss Cecil some questions concerning this *prowler*, and the confusion visible in her pretty face and in her manner, proved that English Bill's intelligence had been true; and though the captain (as the event proved) was only amusing himself during his visit to the colonel, he resolved to punish 'the *demmed* provincial for his impertinence!'

Some of the villagers thought that the captain wished only Miss Cecil's fine fortune, for we all knew the colonel to be reputed very rich; but English Bill indignantly vowed that his master was rich enough to buy all the colonel's property thrice over, and that he was only making a little love to lighten the time, that it was all fun and the captain's way, for he had that peculiar fluency of speech which is ever a sign of little feeling and great poverty of thought.

"Whether or not Miss Cecil had changed, and forgotten the poor lad, who was well nigh breaking his heart about her, I was unable then to say.

'Woman's a changeful and a various thing,'

saith Dryden; *varium et mutabile semper femina*. But Mr. Frank's 'd—ned good-natured friends' in the village daily brought him tidings of how Miss Cecil and the captain were always together; how sweetly she smiled when he spoke; how they played and sang like two laverocks together, and sat for hours in the bonny bower which he knew so well, and over which his own hands had trained and twined the roses to please her. Some kind people even went the length of fixing the very wedding-day, the colour of the bride's dress, and knew to a bodle the sum which the colonel was to bestow upon her when the Reverend Mr. Priestly had made Miss Cecil bone of the captain's bone and flesh of his flesh. These evil tidings were as gall and wormwood to the poor suffering lad at the manse; and though he never spoke of it, none knew his misery better than I; and when his father, the old minister, who was then well up in the vale of years and sinking under a complication of diseases, asked my advice anent his son, I urged that he should be sent back to college; and back he would have gone instantler, by the Edinburgh railway, but for the following unfortunate mischance.

"Stung to the very heart by some of the wicked information

volunteered by *you*, John Crupper,—for, being an auld dragoon, you had a species of fellow-feeling for the ne'er-do-weel captain,—one evening, Mr. Frank, with a breast full of desperate thoughts, threw his gun over his shoulder, and clearing the colonel's park-dyke by one bound, entered the lawn in search of his lost Cecil. As fate would have it, he had not gone ten yards when he was met face to face by the Honourable Charles Fetlock, who was smoking a cigar under the old lime-trees, and arranging his hair and moustachios, by using the polished back of his gold watch for a mirror.

“‘Ah, the deuce!’ said he, looking up; ‘I have been looking for you, my fine fellow, for some days past.’

“‘I am always found by those who really want me, Captain Fetlock; any message sent to the manse would have reached me.’

“‘Message! what do you mean, eh?—ah—I merely wished to know why you are constantly on the prowl about Fairy Bank, with that gun,—it is so poacher-like! and yet you have not the air of a poacher, I think.’

“‘Leave these inquiries to Colonel Marchmont. You, sir, have at least no right to question me.’

“‘I have every right, my dear fellow,’ replied the captain, with the most provoking *nonchalance*, as he lit a fusee, and applied it to a fresh cigar; ‘but do not be excited; perhaps you are a lover of some of the girls about the house? That maid of Miss Marchmont’s is a deuced fine creature! You reddened. Ah! it is she. Well, I shall speak to little May for you; be composed, now, young man, do; it’s all right. Will you have a cigar, or some sherry and soda-water?’

“Frank snatched away the captain’s silver cigar-case, the gift of the Caledonian United Service Club, and dashed it on the ground.

“‘Hullo! what the deuce—are you mad, fellow?’ cried the captain, as he picked it up; ‘who the devil are you? Oh! I remember—Mr. Frank Hilton, son of the old boy who lives down at the manse, yonder. Oh! I begin to perceive the game! Did not the impertinent gossips and idle scandalmongers of your hamlet very oddly couple your name and Miss Marchmont’s together? answer me in a straightforward manner, if you please.’

“‘They did so, justly, Captain Fetlock,’ said Frank, with the deepest emotion; ‘we have loved each other for a year and more—’

“‘Eh?—ah! you have loved each other for a year and more,’ reiterated the captain, elevating his eyebrows. ‘You have mistaken friendship for love, young man; no uncommon thing. Besides, I have heard that you are not very rich, and should think it barely possible that Miss Marchmont could love you. But, ah—there is the dinner-bell ringing. I wonder your irritable paternal parent has not sent a mob to deprive us of that too!’

“‘I am poor, sir, it is true,’ said Frank, while the bitter tears came unbidden to his eyes; ‘I am very poor; yet Cecil loves me—or at least, she loved me once.’

“‘Oh, my dear fellow, absurd, absurd!’ continued the captain,

with the most impertinent composure. 'Seriously, now, you do not think it possible that she can have loved you,—since I came here, at least.'

"The superlative vanity of this remark would have made Frank laugh, had he not been choking with grief and passion.

"'Captain Fetlock, you are a fool and a coward!' said the bold lad, with sudden rage.

"'Sir!' said the captain, who was paralysed with astonishment.

"'You are a fool and a coward; for you have trifled with my honest confidence, and insulted my affliction with a smile on your face.'

"'Hush! you insolent boy,' said the captain, as footsteps were heard on the gravel walk; 'Hush! and begone! but remember that my groom shall chastise this insolence, as it deserves to be, with a horsewhip.'

"'You are a fool and a coward, sir!' repeated Frank, for the third time, raising his voice as the footsteps approached nearer behind a privet-hedge; 'I am old enough to maintain my character as a man, and, in spite of the law, can level a pistol with you or any one; and give me but the opportunity, and I will soon rid the world of such a blockhead'

"These were awfu' words, sir, to come from a Christian mouth, but the poor lad was beside himself with passion; he erred, and let us hope he has been forgiven, for, as Pope saith—

'To err is human—to forgive, divine.'

"'Begone, sir,' said the captain, with great contempt, and with a melodramatic flourish of his cigar, as he turned on his heel and went away; but he had not stepped ten yards before Mr. Frank's gun, which had been cocked by some mischance as he climbed over the park wall, *went off*, and—oh! doleful, yea, horrible to relate—a charge of buck-shot was lodged in the body of the captain, who uttered a faint cry, wildly threw up his hands, and fell senseless on the gravel path.

"He bled profusely from a wound in the side, and for a time his voice was gone. Full of horror, Frank went down on his knees beside him. The colonel, who had been behind the hedge, and had heard these last ominous words, *I will soon rid the world of such a blockhead*, seized Mr. Frank by the throat, and loudly and coarsely accused him of murder. Gude save us! it was an awfu' thing to nappen in a Christian country, and in a peaceful and God-fearing Scottish village.

"Stunned for a moment by this dire calamity, poor Frank permitted the furious colonel to hold him; but no sooner did he see Miss Cecil and all the servants, whom the shot had alarmed, come rushing from the portico of the house, than he shook off the old man like a bairn, knocked over Ali Baba (who tried to intercept him)

like a nine-pin, and vaulting over the park wall, came down to me, told me his story, and craved advice and shelter.

"I hid him in a great meal-girnel, and, taking my bonnet and staff, set out in quest of intelligence."

CHAPTER IV

STORY OF THE MINISTER'S SON, CONCLUDED.

"BENT on being now revenged for the affront about the bell, the colonel sent to Roger Baillie immediate orders to arrest the *murderer* (an awfu' word that! and well may you grow pale, sir); but though the nabob was in the commission of the peace, auld Roger loved the lad, as we all did, and complained of a grievous stitch in his side, vowing that he could not stir from his own ingle that night. The puir captain was in a terrible state of mind and body, and believing himself to be dying, dictated to that officious fellow, the Reverend Mr. Priestly, a circumstantial account of the interview in the avenue, with a statement to the effect that the moment his back was turned, his rival had levelled the gun and shot him. In all this there was a terrible air of probability, and everybody whispered it would go very hard with puir Mr. Frank, for the sheriff was a bosom friend of the colonel's, and an episcopalian too.

"The poor lad was wretched beyond all human wretchedness, the more so that he dared not see his auld father, and heard that Miss Cecil was so overcome by all these events, that she was seized by a deadly fever, and was dangerously ill. Some said this was because of the captain's perilous condition; but I thought otherwise.

"On the very night that Roger the constable received a positive mandate from the sheriff to arrest Mr. Frank, he lent him his own horse, and to get clear of the law he fled the kingdom, by crossing the Border into England, and went by the railway to London; so, sir, from that time to this—six, yea, nearly seven long years ago—I have never heard of him; but I say, with my heart as full as this tumbler, may God bless him if he be in life, and rest him if in death, for he was a good and leal lad as any in all braid Scotland!

"The captain, instead of dying, as everybody expected and feared he would, grew well soon after, for the proverb saith, *it is lang before the De'il dies*; and after proposing to Miss Cecil and being refused—for so it was confidently reported—he rejoined his regiment at Piershill, where the report had gone before him that he had fought a desperate duel about a young lady—a report which the captain did not find it necessary to contradict. But, alas! sir, these terrible passages broke our poor minister's heart. From the day his son left Aikendean for ever, he never raised his head, and never smiled, save once, again; and after lingering on for a few months in a helpless state, he passed away from among us to the place of his reward.

Sorely he mourned and wept for his son—yea, even as David wept for Absalom, did he mourn and weep—for he was the firstborn of she who slept beside her younger little ones in the auld kirkyard.

"As if it were yesterday, I remember the sad day of his departure. It was a bright May morning, and everything looked sweet and smiling. I was the ruling elder, and John, the minister's man, came to me with tears in his eyes, and said, in a low whisper—

"‘Oh, Maister Denholm, come awa—the minister is deeing, and would like to see the elders before he departs,’ and then the auld man sobbed heavily.

"‘Bairns, you have a holiday,’ said I, running out bare-headed from the school.

"We soon gathered and surrounded his bed in that chamber of death, where he who had ministered unto us in godliæss for more than half a century lay speechless and pale, and able only to indicate by a wave of his wasted hand, and a last smile on his sad face, that he knew us as we knelt around his bed.

"I gave a short prayer; my heart was full, and my words were few, because my thoughts were many; and then, with tremulous voices, we sang that beautiful hymn, which saith—

‘I come, I come, at Thy command,
I give my spirit to Thy hand;
Stretch forth Thine everlasting arms,
And shield me in the last alarms.
The hour of my departure’s come,
I hear the voice that calls me home!
Now, O my God, let trouble cease—
Now let Thy servant die in peace!’

"Slowly he waved his hand as we sung, and so the hymn proceeded; ilka wave sank lower and lower, until at last that hand which was never closed against the poor and the portionless lay still, to move *no more*.

"The summer morning was bright and sunny; the perfume of the hawthorn came through the open windows of the auld manse with the hum of the honey-bees, the glad voices of the village bairns, and the brawl of the rushing burn, as I closed his eyes, and the elders bowed their white heads lower yet in prayer.

"Our hearts were sad—yea, exceeding sorrowful!"

The poor dominie drew his cuff across his eyes as he spoke, and I covered my face with my hands, for I knew the chamber well, and the whole of that awful scene arose before me like a picture.

"We buried him beside his gudewife and their three dead bairns, in the sunny corner of the auld kirkyard, and on that dreich funeral day there was not a dry eye in the whole parish. But just before we left the manse, at the uplifting of the coffin, who should appear, both clad in the deepest mourning, with white weepers on their cuffs, but the fiery auld devil of a colonel and the highflying episcopal Mr. Priestly. Uninvited, they came to pay the last

tribute to the man they had quarrelled with in life, but respected in death. The colonel craved permission to hold the ribbon at the foot of the pall, and his chaplain begged leave (after the minister of St. Bathans) to offer up a prayer, which he did in the most beautiful language, and made such an eulogium on our dear auld minister, as won every heart in the parish; and by universal subscription, we bought him a handsome bell to hang up in his gable, in place of that we had taken; and were the best of good friends ever after."

"And Cecil?" said I; the words caused a quivering on my lips as I said them.

"She never married, and the greater is the cause of pity, puir thing! For, a year after these events, by the failure of a bank in Calcutta, and other mischances, the colonel lost every shilling he had in the world but his half-pay. He was a proud man, and the change broke his spirit, for he died in the fall of the year; and as his income died with him, Miss Cecil was left penniless, and all alone in the world.

"There is a time, captain, when undeserved evils come upon us so quickly and so heavily, that the impious may well believe—even as the fool saith in his heart—that there is no protecting Providence.

"A rich burgess of Berwick bought the house and furniture; Mr. Wadset, the writer (after having such pretty pickings that he set up his son as an advocate in Edinburgh), handed over the small residue to Miss Cecil, and she left this place, naebody kens for where. Even Wadset knows not, and it was little that he cared, though I inquired of him often, having a fatherly affection for the sweet young lady that was loved by Frank Hilton; but these things are all past—yea, they are as a tale that is told."

"My poor Cecil!" I exclaimed, clasping my hands, as a hundred visions of sorrow, poverty, and mortification, crowded upon my imagination.

"Yours—*yours*, sir—sir!" said the dominie, looking under, over, and through his horn spectacles, while honest John Crupper, the landlord, laid down his pipe to stare at me.

"Well, Dominie, I will give you a *sequel* to your story. Young Frank, by the death of his father, had two or three hundred pounds left to him, which was all he possessed in the world; and believe me, many a worthy fellow often has less. He received a letter of recommendation from an old general officer to the senior lieutenant-colonel of a regiment serving in India. He joined it as a gentleman volunteer, and served in Cabul against the Affghans; he was there when four thousand five hundred British troops, with twelve thousand camp-followers, commenced that disastrous retreat, on which, after being nearly annihilated in the passes of the mountains, they gave their best officers and all the ladies, as hostages for the evacuation of Jellalabad by General Sale. The cold was intense! The breath froze in icicles on the moustaches of

the soldiers and the bridles of the horses. From rocks a thousand feet in height, overshadowing the narrow gorge for miles, the ferocious Affghans poured down a deadly fire upon the terrified and disorganized mass, and the slaughter was fearful—the 44th Regiment, in particular, was well nigh exterminated. Frank Hilton was one of the fortunate few who escaped to join General Pollock (a countryman of ours, Dominie), who crossed the Punjaub, dispersed the Affghans before Jellalabad, and relieved General Sir Robert Sale. There Frank received his ensigncy, and was complimented in general orders for his bravery at the storming and destruction of the Balahissar, or citadel of Cabul, where all the horrors of that awful retreat were amply avenged. This won him promotion, and *he* now addresses *you* as a lieutenant in 'the Queen's Own' Regiment of infantry! My good Dominie, is it possible that only six years of such work can have changed me so much that you cannot recognise me?"

"Mr. Frank—amazement—you? I have been blind—yea, clean daft! But your cheek, which was smooth and round as an apple, is now browned like a burned bannock, and you have a gude pair of whiskers, while your hair is black and curled. You are taller and stronger—even your voice is changed! Dear, dear! Oh, if our auld minister, or my gudewife, had been spared to see you this night!"

"Bravo!" cried John Crupper, flourishing his pipe, and grasping my other hand, for the dominie had already possessed himself of one. "Oh, Master Frank, but this trick of yours is sae like your auld ways, that it is the best proof of your identity."

The dominie, who by this time was what the Scots call "greeting fu'," wept upon my hand, and smoothed my hair with his trembling fingers, for the old man had a most sincere regard for me, but the landlord, who had no great love for the pathetic, after a pause, said—

"Mr. Frank, did you ever, when on service, fall in——"

"Wi' your auld regiment, the Scots Greys, nae doubt," said the dominie, pettishly.

"No—with that Honourable Captain Fetlock, who made love to Miss Cecil?"

"He has been serving with a corps of light dragoons on the Bengal establishment, a thousand miles and more from where I was fighting, under General Pollock and Sir Robert Sale; thus I have never met with him, but one day I hope to do so, and to wrest from him a written acknowledgment of the false accusation that I wished to assassinate him—a vile and wicked aspersion, by which I lost my honour, my love, and my home!"

Fresh jorums of punch were ordered, and before the clock in the spire of the venerable church struck twelve, my friend the dominie was at least "three sheets in the wind," and had sung—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?"

while, hand in hand, the three of us joined in the chorus, till we made the rafters ring.

The dominie, though the most abstemious man in the parish, drank ny health so repeatedly, and spoke so much, that he soon passed through all the different stages of hilarity—from being joyous to uproarious, and from thence to being helpless. I was now obliged to summon Buff, who, with the assistance of the landlord, conducted him home to his own cottage, where they put him in an arm-chair, rolled a grey plaid round him, and bade him “good night” about three in the morning.

CHAPTER V.

REMINISCENCES.

THE kindly recollections of myself and of my family, which I had met with from the two old villagers with whom I had passed so pleasant an evening, were a source of the purest gratification to me; but Cecil Marchmont—where was she?

The place which I now revisited was full of her memory and of her presence. *She never married—Miss Cecil left this place, no one knows for where!* were ever in my ears, just as the dominie said them; and I wearied myself with futile, bitter, and exasperating reflections and conjectures.

Next morning, I was up with the lark; the April sun shone brightly down the wooded glen, and shed a golden gleam on the lewy leaves and bed of the brawling stream, which jarred against the rocks, the trees, and the stones that the flood of the past winter had brought down from the hills of the Lammermuir. From the cottage chimneys the thin blue smoke was ascending in long unbroken columns into the pure morning sky; the white pigeons were nestling together on the moss-grown roofs, and the black gleds were wheeling high above the woods, the buds of which were expanding into leaf, in the genial atmosphere of spring.

I stepped over the churchyard stile, and stood in the humble burial-place, and within a few feet of where all my kindred lay. The long rank blades of dog-grass, the nodding thistles, the broad-leaved docks and nettles, were bent with silvery dew; but the walls of the venerable kirk, with its low-browed door and pointed Scottish spire, its square buttresses and crow-stepped gable, were reddening in the rising sun. Above me, on the summit of the wooded brae, I saw the chimneys and oriels of Fairy Bank, that rose above the coppice. That well-known house had other tenants now, and I walked hastily round the church, for a gush of bitterness came up in my heart; and as old Willie Aiken, the sexton, who was digging a grave near me, began to whistle merrily, even that fretted me.

And there stood the old manse, just as I had last seen it, with the

green espaliers trained against its white harled gables; its antique and ivy-shrouded chimneys, in which the sparrows built their nests, —I knew every stone in its walls, every pane in its windows, from which some children were gazing at me in wonder; and I hoped a time would never come when they should feel the bitterness which I then felt—they looked so happy and so young!

I stood but a few yards distant from the door within which all who loved me once had lived and died, and where I had been born; but I was a *stranger* now, and could not, unbidden, pass its threshold. There was something very bitter in that conviction too. Yet, when standing there, with the voice of the old steeple-clock in my ear, I could not realize it, or that the last six years of my eventful life, and the whirl and carnage of the Affghan war, had not been all a dream! But there lay the graves of my father and mother, side by side, and close to the southern aisle. The grass grew thick above them, for there were now none who cared to trim it, and the rail that enclosed them had already become red with rust. The place looked old and forlorn.

Oppressed by a sense of sorrow and respect, I took off my cap on approaching this hallowed place, and on the handsome marble tablet in the old wall read the tribute inscribed by the heritors, parishioners, and by the synod of the Merse and Teviotdale, to "the genius, piety, and pastoral labours" of him who slept below, and who had "departed in the seventy-fifth year of his age and the *fiftieth* of his ministry." Then followed the thirteenth verse of the fourteenth chapter of Revelations, which we find so frequently inscribed on tombstones in Scotland; and the touching words sank deep into my heart; for many a time in other years, at the village funerals of the good people who slept around him, I had heard my father close the usual prayer with the same impressive words.

The revered and well-remembered figures and faces of the dead came back to my memory so powerfully, that my emotion became almost agony; and with a swollen heart I turned to leave the place for ever.

"God bless you! Mr. Frank," said the old dominie, who was seated on the kirk-stile, where he had been watching and waiting for me; "you have been offering up a just tribute; but put on your cap, my gude man (I had forgotten that it was still in my hand). I never enter this place," continued the schoolmaster, placing behind him the hand which contained his snuff-mull, and planting his horn-handled cane on the ground, "never, without remembering the words of Adam Smith on the inutility—yea, sinfulness—of grieving for the dead. But oh, Mr. Frank, it *is* a strange thing, how each generation weeps for that which goes before it, and then in turn, is swept into the gulf of Time. Verily Ossian of old said truly, 'The sons of future years shall pass away! Another race shall rise, for the people are like the leaves of woody Morven, that pass away in the rustling blast, and other leaves lift their green heads on high.'"

The moralizing pursued by my good dominie was very consonant to my train of thought, as we wended our way up the little street of the village, where ducks innumerable were squattering in the puddle around the fountain-well, and where hens scraped nests in the warm sunshine, back to the inn, where Buff was in attendance, and a hearty Scottish breakfast, with salmon taken that morning from the river, awaited us.

After this repast my drum beat in the village, and Sergeant Edmond paraded the little detachment for my inspection before the inn door—a military display, which (although the soldiers were only in their shell jackets and forage caps) afforded supreme satisfaction to the old dragoon, my landlord, and intense gratification to the assembled population of the village, who felt no small interest in the part performed by “our auld minister’s son,” as they named me; for my identity had spread like wildfire from cottage to cottage, and from ingle to ingle.

After the *review*, I had a regular levee of all the good people of the place, and had to visit them all in turn, to hear their stories of other times—and many a bannock was broken and many a bottle produced; the kindness of the poor parishioners was excessive; but I did not receive an invitation to dine at the manse, for, jealous of the popularity enjoyed by his predecessor, the Reverend Mr. Maclatter—a divine who should never have “wagged his head” in the pulpit of Aikendean but for the recent Disruption in the kirk—did not deign to honour me with the slightest notice. Yet I would have given the world (as the saying is) to have seen once more the inside of that dear old manse, every chamber, every door, press, nook and corner of which were engraven in my memory, so that I could have gone through them blindfolded and never made one mistake.

I made many inquiries of all who were likely to afford me information, as to where Cecil had gone on leaving her home, but fruitlessly, for none knew, though many were anxious to know; for the good crones of the old village remembered kindly her sweetness of manner, her open hand to the poor, and her exceeding goodness to the sick and ailing. Mr. Wadset had removed to another locality, where his son had obtained a sheriffdom, by dint of that toadying to government functionaries which is now the resort of Scotland’s briefless barristers.

But, after all that had passed, what mattered it, even if I did discover her address? Could I write to her now, and if I did so, would she answer me? Believing, as perhaps she did, that I was merely an unsuccessful, or as her father had once tauntingly said, an unconvicted—assassin. . . Besides, six years had passed since last we saw and loved each other. In the whirl of events, till this visit to Aikendean brought my heart back to other days and other thoughts in all its strength and freshness, I had at times, all but forgotten her; could I then expect—or dare to hope, that Cecil should remember me?

But here my old dominie, to whom I could not forbear imparting my hopes and fears, would come to my aid, as usual, with a quotation, and bade me remember the words of Byron:—

'Alas! the love of woman, it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of hers upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring'

"Beautiful words, Mr. Frank—even Robbie Burns never wrote better or more true; and I will warrant you that Miss Cecil will have been faithful to her first love as the needle to the pole."

"But, six years, Dominie, think of such a time; when moreover she knows not if I am in the land of the living; alas! how can I be certain that the grave has not closed over *her*. And she was penniless, you say? There is a world of frightful conjecture opened up by that word, penniless. It is terrible! Besides, she may have married, and may now be the mother of quite a family. Upon my honour, I am foolish to think of her, and you are wrong, Dominie, to feed my fading hopes. But it is kindly meant. Pshaw! I was almost content, until this devilish detachment brought me back to scenes of so many happy and so many bitter memories."

I soon became miserable, or at least completely tired of Aikendean, and longed to be gone, or that the navvies would begin some of their old pranks, such as breaking the kirk windows, demolishing the toll-bars, fighting in the whiskey-shops, and rioting on their wage-nights; anything, in short, for a change; but they were quiet as methodists. A week slipped away in the most perfect monotony, till one evening an orderly-corporal arrived from Berwick, covered with dust by his long march, with an order for us to rejoin, as a steamer had come round to convey the whole regiment to Chatham, preparatory to its embarkation for the East.

Early next morning I bade all my newly found but old friends adieu; the poor dominie wept as I shook his hand, and placed therein a new silver-mounted snuff-mull. He gave me a solemn blessing, and hoped I would "yet win a *corona muralis*, such as we read of in Livy, Book xxvi—yea, and that coronet of green grass, which Pliny esteemed the greatest of all military honours."

The entire population of the village accompanied us on the road for two miles, and we parted with three hearty cheers at the Pict-stane-rig. We marched on the same evening into Berwick Barrack-square, and at eight o'clock I found myself at the mess-table, and listening again to the usual amount of military news, fashionable and sporting chit-chat, merriment and well-bred nonsense.

I endeavoured to forget all that a week's sojourn at Aikendean had called back to memory, and made an effort to shake off the gloom that hovered on my brow, as Langley, de Lancy, Popkins, and others would soon have attributed it to some absurdity of their own suggestion, and commenced their jokes and banter accordingly.

The whole regiment was embarked on board the troop-ship

Victoria, which soon steamed us round to the Nore, and up the windings of the shallow and sandy Medway to Chatham, where we landed at the Gun Wharf, and marched into the large square of those gloomy, old and ill-built barracks of brick, which are about the most uncomfortable in Britain.

CHAPTER VI.

CHATHAM.

CHATHAM was the same as when I had seen it last, on my way out to India, and as it will probably be for centuries to come, with its windmills tossing their arms on the breeze, its old rickety houses of wood, and its new, but ill-built streets of brick, that lie round the margin of the Medway; its dilapidated wharves and stores that swarm with rats; its ramparts of brick and numerous glacis of closely shorn grass, with their deep embrasures, deeper ditches and hollow casemates, wooden drawbridges and cannon; its busy dock-yards, with the din of a thousand wooden mallets and iron hammers, falling every second on the ear, and its gates and barracks guarded by Marines, Rifles, and soldiers of all regiments in the service.

Looming through the summer haze, exhaled from the sandy river, I saw the vast dark donjon of Rochester, the work of the Bishop of Bayeux, the brother of England's Norman Conqueror, with its four corner towers, and the square steeple of the cathedral close by; and on the ridge of the hill, Fort Pitt, that temporary resting-place of the weary and worn-out, or totally "used-up" invalids, who return from our military stations abroad, in every part of the world.

That which struck me most, as before, were the hulks housed over with roofs, and anchored amid the mud and slime of the river, which there becomes slow and turgid: anchored side by side, were those old foes the Shannon and the Chesapeake, with many other frigates, seventy-fours and three-deckers, so silent and solitary, when contrasted with the din in the dockyards, from which the most of them have been launched, or the more varied sounds in the large town of barracks on the slope, where the beating of drums and twanging of bugles, the marching out and in of recruits to join, squads for drill, prisoners for Millbank, invalids for Fort Pitt and troops for embarkation, bound to every quarter of the habitable globe, are incessant from *réveille* to sunset. Here in one day we see the beginning and the *end* of military life. The young soldiers bound to Gravesend for embarkation, all youth, smartness, freshness, and high-spirits, cheering as they march through the crowded streets; and the hollow-eyed and emaciated invalids, who have just landed, after the long and comfortless voyage, which has brought them from the sickly shores of the East Indies, the sicklier isles of the West or the snows of North America, to linger out the last few years of life,

a burden to themselves and their friends, to their parishes—to any but the *grateful* Government of Britain.

I had quarters assigned to me in that somewhat dreary terrace, the small windows of which overlook the large parade-ground and soldiers' barracks, on the summit of which, an iron rifleman, the size of life (like la Giralda of Seville), levels his weapon as a weathercock. Buff soon had my room furnished, and all my earthly goods and gear stowed away therein.

Thanks to past experience, I was now "too knowing" to pay fines a second time to that old *routier*, the barrack-serjeant, for the candle-blisters in my press, or the king's-cracks in my window, or the broken fire-shovel, for which I, and every successive occupant of No. 4 Room, No. 2 Stair, had paid fines to her Majesty's Government for the last thirty years. I also knew better than to waste charity on the old rogue who sat near the Barrier Gate, and pretending to be a venerable pensioner showed to the passers a frightful (but painted) scar, which had been obtained under "the Dook of Vellintun," and which had never healed since; or the still older rogue, who posted himself near the dock-gate, where he was always on the verge of starvation, and exhibited a half-crown given to him "by the great Lord Nelson, when he sarved with him aboard the Victory," and which he would rather die than change for food, "though none had passed his blessed mouth for three days."

Neither was I to be subdued by the equally questionable characters who are allowed free ingress to the barracks at all hours; and who, as pretty dealers in scented soaps, eau de Cologne, balms, &c., *would* come into one's room, whether one was dressing or not, and would spread out their little wares in the most captivating way, and in their prettiest English accents seek to seduce unshaven and unfledged ensigns into a flirtation, and waste of their spare cash. Neither was I to be "done" by the lamentable tale of the very interesting woman, who had just been delivered of twins on the very day her dear husband—sob—sob—had embarked for Culcutter with the *last* detachment, and—sob—sob—had left her penniless; for I had heard the same story told in the same way by the same English-woman, exactly word for word, five or six years before, and it had cost me a day's pay; and in the same manner, I made short work with all those children of Israel, who are the curse of all new-comers.

We were to go out in the Candahar, but as she could not be down the river for some weeks yet, we were ordered to make all the arrangements necessary for a long voyage and longer residence in a tropical climate.

One soon wearies of the dull routine and hard work of garrison duty in such a place as Chatham, every day being so exactly like that which went before it. When *on* duty, there are the incessant "rounds" of the barrack-rooms to be made before and after every meal: visiting the sick in hospital, the prisoners in the cells and guard-rooms, and even the children in the regimental schools, and

making the usual inquiry, "whether there are **any** complaints," and filling up a long *report* of trash that is never attended to; and so passes the day, until the tattoo-roll call and extinction of lights and fires free the wearied subaltern for the night. The dock and garrison guards are all alike, a source of annoyance from the multiplicity of useless orders to be obeyed, for as Chatham is a great military *school*, the most and worst are made of everything; but these occupations are varied by the morning sword-exercise in shell-jackets at the Spur Battery; drilling on the Lines; an occasional field-day before the general and all the fashionables and fair ones of Kent; blowing up a sand-fort at the back of Brompton, and taking the pretty village of Gillingham, at the point of the bayonet *on the 18th of June*, amid clouds of dust from the flinty roads and chalky fields; with flirtation, cold pie, sherry and iced champagne between the discharges of musketry, to soften the fatigues of war, and inspire with new valour the British troops, whose sham-fights in these bloodless localities invariably end in the total rout of the Provisional Battalion and all the Four-company Depôts.

Then there are the county balls and the incessant evening parties in the neighbourhood, where one meets the same set of dancing girls, the same set of wall-flowers, and the same frivolous chit-chat, and the same set of thorough-bred little flirts, who abound in all large garrison towns. We had, also, our summer evening lounges on the Terrace, while the band played after mess; and then oyster suppers and billiards at all hours of the night: we rode over to Maidstone and dined with the dragoons; we played at cricket on the Lines; we boated on the river, and spent many an idle hour loitering in Hammond-place, among shops kept by the most sharp-witted Jews that ever made the name of Judea a reproach among Christian men.

These shops are all nearly alike; the windows, counters, and shelves being piled with outfits for Bombay, Madras, and Bengal, America, Cape Coast, and the West Indies—uniforms, accoutrements, everything connected with military appurtenances, from a camp-bed to a sword-knot, and from a pompon to a pair of spurs; and there the wives and daughters of Israel attend, decked out in meretricious finery, bare-necked and bare-armed, using all their wiles and smiles to wheedle the raw subalterns into purchasing the most expensive, and often the most useless articles for the outward voyage; while their worthy kinsmen, Moses, Aaron, and Jacob, perched on their three legged stools within the glass door of the back office, with their narrow souls and sharp faces between the leaves of their garbled ledgers, are ever ready to "do a bit of stiff" in the way of an honest bill for a consideration; and very kind it is of them, as it is only advancing £50 on a bill for £90; or £90 on a bill for £150, as the case may be.

I soon tired of all this, and heartily longed for the day that would see us embarked for wherever their high mightinesses at the Horse Guards were pleased to despatch us; until one evening—an evening

which I shall never forget, a change came over all my impressions and I looked forward with dread to the day when the Candahar would drop down the river from the East India Dock.

May had glided imperceptibly into June, and it was now the first week of that delightful month of pure blue skies and bright warm sunshine, when fishing, hunting, and fowling are in their glory, and greyhounds, guns, and pointers, rods and nets, are all in requisition; when the sun-burned mower bends over the rich clover; when the leaves are in their thickest and richest foliage; when the birds are building nests in their leafy recesses, and filling them with harmony, and when the earth yields up its richest fragrance after the passing summer shower.

Well, then—to descend to plainer prose—on one of those days when the waveless Medway and its flat and sandy shores were glistening under the unclouded sun, our regiment, "the Queen's Own," furnished all the guards for the garrison and dockyards; and as it was my chance to have command of the inlying picquet, I marched it, as usual, at sunset to the Barrier—that massive archway—in the damp and gloomy fortifications which face the military burying-ground, immediately under the lofty Spur Battery and roadway to the town.

The officers' guard-room there is a black and dingy vault, or casemate, the only window of which opens into the deep brick archway; and being beyond the reach of summer heat, Buff and the drummer of the picquet were lighting a fire in the rusty grate, while I sauntered at the Barrier without and smoked a cigar.

Just at this time a very handsome carriage rumbled through the arch in the casemates.

The hour was now nine o'clock; the drums in the square were beating tattoo, and my corporal with two soldiers had commenced to wind up the drawbridge. This process compelled the coachman to pull up his horses for a minute, until they lowered it again; and happening casually to raise my eyes from that day's "Punch," I observed a lady looking from the window of the carriage, the glass of which was down.

Her features, though seen for a moment only by the lingering twilight, made a startling impression upon me. She had that pure paleness which is deemed so aristocratic, without being in the least too delicate; her features were soft, her expression beautiful; her eyes were of a deep blue, but their lashes, like the smooth braids of her hair, were dark—almost black. She had on one of the prettiest of little white crape summer bonnets, and I could perceive a very small hand, cased in a white and well-fitting glove, resting on the carriage window; but the moment I raised my eyes, she at once withdrew her head.

"Thank you—a thousand thanks—good evening," she said to the corporal, who raised his hand to his cap in salute, as the showy carriage swept through the Barrier, and her voice thrilled through me like an electric shock.

She was Cecil—Cecil Marchmont! Oh I would have known that sweet soft voice among ten thousand tongues.

"Boyle," said I, hurriedly, to my corporal, "whose carriage is that?"

"Don't know, sir,—but it passes through the town pretty often."

"Buff, Buff—hollo, Buff, where the devil are you?"

"Here, sir—here," he cried, running out of the Picquet-house with a lump of coal in his hand, and looking surprised at my impatience.

"Hurry after that carriage and find out to whom it belongs—quick, my man, there is not a moment to lose!"

Buff sprang over the drawbridge and ran down the road towards the town, while the soldiers suspended their task of raising the barrier, and I could perceive the rogues winking knowingly at each other, as the corporal said in an under-tone,

"She is a pretty wench, that, in the white bonnet!"

"Ay, Tom—we might march a long summer's day without passing a prettier."

At that moment Buff returned.

"Well," said I, all impatience; "have you discovered——"

"Nothing, sir—no one knows," replied the panting Buff, as he raised a hand to his livery hat; "but I could see that there were a coronet and large coat of arms on the panels."

"And which way did the carriage go?"

"It turned the left-hand corner, sir, right for the Dover road."

"How unfortunate that I am on duty! Blue livery, was it not?"

"Blue, sir, faced with white. Some of the gentlemen at the mess may——"

"Thank you, yes—I'll inquire to-morrow."

Almost immediately after this, we had to lower the ponderous bridge again to admit Fred Langley, who cantered in.

"Ah, Hilton! you have the picquet, eh? been a charming day, has it not? I have been over to Maidstone, dining with some of the Light Dragoons."

"Dining! You must have left early—for the last bugle has sounded not ten minutes since."

"True; we dined early, for I have a pool to-night with De Lancy, and was obliged to leave. The grey has brought me here in half an hour—smart pacer, is she not? the best bit of horseflesh in the three kingdoms. Mostyn, of the Third, offered me £200 for her, and I think he must have her, for she cannot go out with us in the Candahar."

"Did you pass a carriage, Fred?" I asked, as he was touching his boasted grey with the spur; "brown panels, blue livery, and a coronet?"

"A coronet—yes; it was bowling along the Dover road, after two beautiful horses."

"The same—did you observe that charming woman in it?"

"Oh, Lady Montessor—a great beauty indeed, and a bit of a flirt."

"You know her, then," said I, with a sinking heart.

"Intimately! If I get an invitation to her next rout, I shall be happy to take you. Some nice people are to be met at her house—and you will go, of course. Good night."

He cantered in, and I returned to my dungeon or guardroom, for in aspect, the Chatham picquet-house partakes more of the first than the second. I sat down to reflect, by the light of the single commissariat candle, which was set in a dirty black iron holder, on a bare and discoloured table, which, like the dusty grate and fire-place, guard-bed and hard wood chairs, formed such a contrast to my brilliant uniform.

"Lady Montessor! so—so—she is married then; and there was *a child* in the carriage, too, a pretty little girl of four years old, who kissed her hand and laughed to the soldiers."

I reflected bitterly that I had been worse than a fool to indulge in those sad but delightful dreams which the unexpected visit to Aikendean, the reminiscences of the aged dominie, and the sight of so many old familiar faces, had awakened in my breast. Something of pique was mingled with this vain regret; and yet I felt a momentary emotion of satisfaction that she had married so well, for the words of the dominie had led me into a maze of terrible conjectures. Then cold reason came to my aid, and the faint emotion of pique died altogether; for I reflected that poor Cecil could not have known that for the last six years I had been in her Majesty's service—or even that I was still in the land of the living: we had both left that sweet village of Aikendean in the same year, and lost sight of each other at the same time.

"Well—I shall go with Fred to her rout—she will never recognise me in uniform, changed as I am by it, by six years' Indian service, by this sabre-cut on the cheek. Oh yes—I will go, and have an opportunity of seeing—what I shall see when I am there."

CHAPTER VII.

BLANCHE PALMER.

TIME passed on, and I saw no more of this lady or of her carriage; Fred could not inform me whether the maiden-name of Lady Montessor—who was the widow of one of the richest baronets in Kent—had been Marchmont; and to solve the problem, the idea never once occurred to me, of dipping into "Burke." I endeavoured to banish her from my mind (or to nurse myself into the conclusion that I had been mistaken) by engaging in a desperate flirtation with one of the most attractive of the garrison belles.

Her father was a retired something—no one knew what—from

London. He had built unto himself a beautiful villa, a mile or so distant from the Gravesend road, beyond Stroud, a sweet place, with fine old lime-trees before it, and the clear blue Medway winding behind. It was entirely surrounded by a verandah of trellis-work, which was entwined with the thickest woodbine and honeysuckle, and formed the best place in the world for a flirtation, *en passant*, between the figures of a quadrille or the intervals of a polka; for the retired citizen was simple enough to give the garrison some magnificent routs in those splendid drawing-rooms, the casemented windows of which opened down to the floor of the aforesaid verandah.

Now Miss Blanche Palmer, my flame for the time, was everyway attractive; but especially in purse and person, for she was beautiful, dashing, and accomplished to the utmost that French and English governesses could achieve for her. She rode with ease, danced with grace, and had a charming amount of the prettiest chit-chat imaginable; was deep in Byron and Moore, in the lore of music and the drama, mysticism, and all the other *isms* of the day. She had the whitest hand, the tiniest foot, and the thickest braids of beautiful black hair that ever adorned a divine female head; withal, she was proud, imperious, and a little sarcastic; but then, as Langley said, she was "a ward of chancery—a forty thousand pounder, with no end of coal pits, down somewhere in the Midland Counties."

Tickets for the Rochester ball, bouquets, new music, new novels, Bulwer's, Dickens' and Lever's last, were sent every day by me, per Mr. Buff, whom I equipped in a new suit of the most resplendent livery to impress the old city man; and Popkins of ours, who blew a little on the flute, and was a simple and good-hearted fellow, with the aid of the band-master transmogrified a lively Irish jig into an execrable polka, to which no one but himself could keep time. This we had finely emblazoned, published, and dedicated to Miss Blanche Palmer, *and* the officers of "the Queen's Own."

The old citizen was greatly impressed by this absurd and conjunct dedication, and gave us a grand rout in consequence. All the officers of the marine division and those of the Provisional Battalion were there; while a few of the Hussars rode over from Maidstone and dropped in about twelve o'clock, just, as it were, "to see what was going on." As usual in Chatham parties, there was a considerable sprinkling of raw ensigns who had just joined their depôts, used-up captains and old fellows who had returned from the three Presidencies, looking as yellow as the tropical climate and liver complaint, or as emaciated as cholera and ague caught at Hong Kong, could make them.

The whole villa was thrown open; a blaze of light came from all its windows, and the supper-room (the month being June) was like the Blackhole of Calcutta. Suppers are all alike—jelly and ices—champagne, crackers and trifle, sherry, cold fowl, and flirtation—nonsense and blushes; the whole scene was highly exciting and some-

what noisy, for I remember the helpless and dumbfounded air with which the quiet old citizen, who occupied the foot of his hospitable table, regarded the storm of fun that raged about him.

My flirtation with Blanche had now come to a dangerous point, for we had little piques and quarrels which were invariably made up. She had accepted from me a gold bracelet—a serpent biting its own tail—together with a padlock, containing a lock of my hair, and old Palmer had asked me in a somewhat impressive manner whether or not "I was an eldest son?" To this, with a clear conscience, I replied in the affirmative; and from Langley and O'Flannigan I ascertained that he had been making covert queries as to the amount of my *fortune*.

"Fortune," said Fred, as he drew on his gloves and gave his arm to his partner, a pretty girl who looked flushed in face and faded in dress after the siege of the supper table, "he has not much of a personal fortune—but he has tremendous expectations!"

"Ah—I thought so—a fine young man!" said old Palmer, opening his large stupid eyes and polishing his bald head.

"Every one has some expectations—but he is the best and the luckiest fellow in all 'the Queen's Own.'"

Langley moved away with Miss Letty Howard (a greater flirt than little Letty never was draped in white muslin, and a fairer bust than hers was never girt by a berthe of lace), and thereupon Blanche's father who felt the weight of Fred's praises, sent a servant to say he would "drink wine with me."

"Frank," whispered Langley as he passed me, "if the *route* is not here soon, you will find yourself in a mess, my boy. Old Palmer has been asking about your expectations."

I thought Fred was quizzing me, and turned to resume my gay conversation with Blanche, who was seated between me and De Lancy of ours, a consummate fop, who wore pearl rings above his white kid gloves, and I am convinced that Blanche was bored by him.

"Who is that pretty girl with Langley?" I asked.

"My friend Letty—Letty Howard—a very sweet girl," replied Blanche, holding out her glove for me to button.

"Ah! she is going out to India with her brother in the Buffs," lisped De Lancy; "she is in excellent hands, and so I shall not disturb her. Fred has all Byron and the language of the flowers by rote, he is first-rate at all manner of flirtation and saying soft nothings. By the way, Miss Palmer, did *you* know her brother?"

"This room is oppressively warm," said Blanche, who became suddenly flurried and allowed the question to pass unheeded; "Mr. Hilton, I am almost suffocated!"

"The verandah is just behind us—and the night is most beautiful," said I, offering my arm, "would you choose a little promenade?"

"Thank you," said she, with one of her sweetest smiles, as I placed a white lace scarf on her dazzling shoulders, and led her out

to the verandah, where Langley, Popkins, and several of ours were already, conversing with different ladies.

On this night Blanche indeed looked very beautiful! she was entirely dressed in white muslin trimmed with the richest lace, and her ornaments were pearls, which formed a powerful contrast with the blackness of her magnificent hair among which they were entwined.

It was a sweet summer night; a red flush yet lingered in the west and tinged the broad waters of the Medway which wound down from among the green and verdant uplands of the English landscape, till they seemed to flow almost at our feet, and passed where the lights of Rochester were twinkling, and where the shadows of its tall stupendous tower and stately bridge were thrown upon the starlit flow of the river, which there runs with incredible force and speed.

The wine I had taken before supper, and the number of round dances we had after it, combined to make me somewhat giddy; but I felt that now the time had come, when some explanation should be made to Blanche; and yet I had the certainty that even if it was *not* made, she would certainly *not* break her heart, as I had just carried on with her the same species of flirtation that Gascoigne of the Rifles, Jack Lumley of the Fusileers, Howard of the Buffs, and others, whose names were all known to our mess, had successively carried on before; and this cooling reflection caused me to make another circuit of the terrace with her, engaged in the veriest commonplace.

I felt convinced that she would make a very unexceptionable wife (as wives go on the Indian establishment) notwithstanding her little disposition to coquetry; and that those endless—coal-pits which Fred Langley spoke of, would make a very pleasant and reputable addition to a subaltern's exchequer; but officers do not like to marry women who have become garrison belles, and whose names have been bandied about a mess table (harmlessly, of course,) and coupled with those of the dancing men of half-a-dozen regiments; and then, as some one says somewhere, with great truth, "we may love, and *think* we love entirely, and still find another our hearts cling unto more strongly, and mingle with, as if each were but the half, and wanted the *other half* to make a complete and harmonious whole." These reflections, with the stories of O'Flannigan the captain of our Grenadiers, of "how nearly she had hooked Gascoigne of the Rifles" (who was killed the other day at Alma), "and also, how high Howard of the Buffs stood in her favour, before he went to Tilbury," brought us round the verandah a second time; and though I carried her fan and her bouquet, adjusted her scarf and fastened her bracelet upon the whitest of arms, and her glove upon the prettiest of hands, indecision yet fettered my tongue, and I left unsaid all that the beautiful Blanche too evidently and justly expected I should say; we rejoined the dancers, and to the music of our band (one of the finest in the service) plunged again into the whirling throng; but for the remainder of that night (or rather morning) I could perceive that Blanche was somewhat cold and piqued with me, and more disposed

to flirt with O'Flannigan and others than I had ever before seen her.

"Well," said Langley, as we drove home in his dog-cart; "what passed in the corner of that convenient verandah—something pleasant, no doubt—eh? you proposed, of course, and were referred to Papa Palmer?"

"No," said I, briefly, for I felt somewhat dissatisfied with myself.

"No?—eh—what the deuce! after the fine character I gave to the old man? You owe me a dozen of wine, for the sketch I gave him of your family and expectations."

"I fear I do not love this woman, Fred, nor anything approaching to it—and yet I could not part from her without a sigh. She is beautiful and highly accomplished—but—but I fear I have only been dazzled by her."

"But the coal pits, my boy—think of the coal pits."

"I have made a great fool of myself in going so far."

"Yet the girl is very loveable, Frank!"

"And would be a credit to me in some respects."

"And to 'the Queen's Own,' of course," said Langley, as we rumbled along Howard-place, and turned up to the left, towards the barracks. "Your reflections are identically the same as Lumley of the Fusileers and Jack Howard of the Buffs made before you."

"D——n Lumley and Howard of the Buffs!" said I, angrily; "it is hearing her name constantly jangled with theirs which gives me this unmanly indecision!"

"She would find in India old friends and admirers, in every town between Moultaun and Madras."

"I saw her blush to the temples, when that cunning puppy De Lancy of ours spoke to her of Howard."

"Fine girl, his sister! I wish *she* had the coal pits; and I will bet a hundred to one, that she would go out with us in the Candahar, but seriously, a word in your ear Frank, said he, as we swept past the picquet-house barrier, alighted at the barrack gate, and walked up to the officers' terrace; "get out of this entanglement as handsomely as you can. The route will soon be here, and when we march, be assured that you will be forgotten as others have been, before your time, in the flirtation that will begin with some one else. The 18th Royal Irish are coming in from Canterbury, and pretty Blanche will soon find consolation. These are not the women that *we* marry, Frank. I should like to see such a woman as Lady Montessor attached to the regiment. She would indeed be a credit to it. Good night—we will leave our cards at old Palmer's to-morrow, and lunch at Upnor."

"Lady Montessor," I muttered, as the ever wakeful Buff lighted me to my room; "I know not whether that name will cure my casual love for Blanche, or teach me to love her outright."

CHAPTER VIII.

A PROPOSAL.

AFTER evening parade next day, Fred Langley and I rode over to Palmer's Villa, to leave our cards; we had no intention of doing more, but on being told by a servant that the old gentleman had gone to London by the railway, and that "Miss Blanche was at home," I stood for a moment irresolutely, and then dismounted, while Fred left me with a laugh and a wink, and galloped back to Chatham, as he had to attend a rowing-match at Upnor Castle, where we had pitted eight chosen men of our Light Company, against eight Marines of the Chatham division, and where, that evening, we beat them hollow.

I was ushered into the back drawing-room, a door from which opened into the rich conservatory. Blanche was not there to receive me, and through the half-drawn curtains of the front room, I could still perceive some traces of the last night's entertainment. I had not waited a minute, when I heard voices in the conservatory, the glass-door of which was fastened; but through it, I saw Blanche and her friend and gossip, Letty Howard, approaching slowly, for they were culling each a bouquet from the brilliant flowers that grew on the stone shelves on each side of the passage—shelves from which Langley, who had all the language of the flowers by heart, had made up many a charming love-letter in symbols for me and others who were less learned than himself in this Oriental fashion.

Blanche was attired in one of the most becoming of barege dresses, and its many folds undulated gracefully about her fine form; her black hair was braided in the most simple way; she looked coquetishly beautiful, and from time to time smiled in that bright and artificial manner which is common to all those pretty women who very properly reserve all their ill-humour for brothers, servants, and husbands, if they have them.

Blanche said something about Ensign Popkins of "the Queen's Own," and then they laughed aloud.

"Little Popkins is so absurdly timid!" said Letty.

"A rare quality in a Londoner!" added Blanche, as she tied her bouquet with a white ribbon.

"But an invariable sign of innocence."

"A quality still more rare," said Blanche, "yet we should always doubt a fluent love-maker."

"Like Frank Hilton—ah?" said Letty, with one of her artificial smiles: "what a hold he takes of one in a round dance!"

"Come now," said Blanche, coyly, "don't be impertinent, Letty, or you shall not have that pretty bouquet. Had you termed *your* admirer, Popkins, stupid instead of timid, you had been nearer the truth."

"Poor Mr. Popkins—he waltzes with so much solemnity and earnestness."

"How can you be troubled with such a creature when such men as Montague, Hilton, and Langley are quartered here?"

"Faith, Blanche, he is worth the winning; his father is rich as a Jew."

"I would rather lose than win such a lover—a pug-nosed and white-haired ensign!"

"But he is *so* rich, and I am bent on having a carriage—mamma's jointure is very small; but in my heart, I do like young Fred Langley better."

"And I, Hilton—he is my man of all 'the Queen's Own!' Oh, we shall miss the regiment sadly when it marches!"

"But, have you quite forgotten my poor brother Jack of the Buffs?"

"I have not," said Blanche, as her laugh ceased; "but the impertinent fellow seems to have forgotten *me* since he was sent with that detachment to Tilbury."

"My brother has a handsome fortune, Blanche dear—with the best of expectations; while I suspect your Hilton is poor, and Cupid and poverty could never agree; but I beg pardon for——"

"For what?" asked Blanche, a little sharply.

"As you leaned on his *right* arm last night, I thought you might be engaged."

"Not at all, Letty dear," replied Blanche, inserting her pretty nose into her bouquet; "I shall not be in a hurry marrying, until I see something worth having. One can wed whenever one pleases."

"And you have forgot my brother Jack in your flirtation with Hilton?"

"I have not—I tell you, girl."

"I believe that both love you."

"Sincerely?" asked Blanche, pithily.

"Well—yes, I think so—as sincerity goes among red-coats. Let as toss up for which you will marry, if they both offer."

"Why not marry him who offers first. But it is excellent! Do you toss for me, Letty, please, and let us see which will fall into those delightful coal pits, about which Lumley, of the Scots Fusiliers, made so many inapudent jokes at mess, after I had refused him."

Letty took a crown from her purse, and balanced it on the points of her fingers, and she was so full of gaiety and animal spirits that she looked very beautiful and attractive at that moment.

"The queen's head will be your Scottish lover, and the St. George for my poor brother Jack, who mopes himself to death at Tilbury Fort."

Up went the glittering crown, which rung in its descent upon the marble pavement of the conservatory.

"The head for a guinea!" cried Blanche, springing towards it, and clapping her hands.

"It *is* the head," said Letty, laughing; "but I don't despair of Jack's success yet. I would *so* love you for a sister, and we would plan such splendid routs, such pic-nics and regattas——"

At that moment the rascal of a servant, who had probably forgotten me, put his powdered-head into the lower door of the conservatory, and gave my card on a silver salver to Blanche, who immediately shook out the well-flounced skirt of her barege dress, smoothed her braids, and put on her sweetest smile to greet me. Whispering something to Letty, who left the conservatory by the lower door, Blanche ascended the steps and entered the drawing-room, where I—who had not been altogether flattered by the conversation, which I had been half compelled to overhear—rose from a down-fauteuil, and laid aside the daily-paper, over which my eyes had been wandering.

The usual compliments, and the invariable and insipid "hope that she had not been fatigued by the dancing of last night;" a few jesting remarks on the flirtations and probable conquests we had observed, were soon dismissed; we gradually conversed on other topics, and I took her hand in mine. When I remembered the joy expressed by Blanche, when the thoughtless Letty's proposal for affording her brother one more chance assigned *me* to her favour; when I saw how bright and beautiful she looked; when I reflected that I might have such a dazzling creature, for the mere ceremony perhaps of asking—a warm-hearted girl (as I hoped), who would cling to me, and love me, when I had no other relation on earth that I knew of; I must own, that I felt every way inclined to unite my fate with hers, and lay my heart at her feet: and in contemplating the splendour of her beautiful smile, the turn of her soft cheek, to which the thick braids of her perfumed hair formed such a contrast—together with her seducing and brilliant manner, the mess-room banter of such fops as De Lancy, and more earnest advice of such honest friends as Fred Langley, were completely forgotten in the charms of the place, the hour and the person of Blanche; and after considerable hesitation, and some of those anxious pauses which the beatings of the heart alone fill up, I told how I loved her—dearly loved her!

She heard me in silence and with a sweet vague and averted smile—for, alas! too many had told her the same thing, for the avowal to startle her now; but she did not offer the slightest resistance, as I drew a pearl-ring from her finger, and replaced it by one of my own—as I did so imprinting on her hand, the kiss I dared not yet transfer to her cheek, for the bantered Popkins, at that moment could not have been more timid than Frank Hilton.

I did not linger long after this, and my nag was brought round to the door.

"Good-bye, Frank," said she. It was the first time she had called me so, and my heart beat fast.

"Adieu, dearest Blanche—I shall see you at the review—our regiment will be on the right of the line."

"And you will find our carriage a good place near the salut-ing-post."

"The best, if possible. Drive through the Barracks, and past St. Mary's Guard-house to avoid the crush, and I shall see you properly placed. Will you have the close carriage."

"At this season? Oh no—the phaeton with the cream-coloured ponies—I shall drive myself."

"Then I shall easily recognise you—"

"Yes—adieu, dear."

She kissed her pretty hand from the drawing-room window as I rode down the slope, and entered the avenue of dahlias and shrubbery which led to the Stroud road, and as I crossed the long bridge of Rochester, I was not without hope that her dear blue-eyes were still watching me.

I had now to open the trenches with old Palmer, who I feared had been somewhat imposed upon by Buff's resplendent livery and plush breeches, and by Langley's fine blood-mare, which I rode every day as if she was my own; for Fred had several fine nags, and gave me the "run" of his stable, while he was kind enough moreover to set off my "great expectations" in the most approved form, and Buff (for whom old Palmer's cook had conceived a kindness) was no way behind him, as the reader may easily believe.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MESS.

I HAD not an opportunity of telling Langley what I had been about, as I did not see him until we met at the mess-table in the evening, and then we were at different ends of the room.

The rowing-match down the river to Upnor, and old Palmer's rout, with its consequent flirtations, formed the staple subjects for discussion during dinner; and amid much banter, absurdity, and raillery, the names of half the ladies within ten miles were mentioned without reserve, in the hearing of Buff and ten or fifteen other soldiers in livery.

"What is—or was old Palmer?" asked O'Hara.

"A retired cheesemonger from the City, I presume," lisped De Lancy, who was insufferably vain and a *roué*; "but here is Hilton—he is always there, and must know best."

"She is a charming girl, his daughter," said Montague, the lieutenant of our seventh company; "Popkins has been long over head and ears in love with her. You asked her to dance last night, of course, Phil?"

"Yes," simpered Popkins, "but on consulting her card, she found herself engaged a dozen deep, and said I should always engage her at least the day before."

I felt very much inclined to punch the head of the supercilious De Lancy. His father had made a splendid fortune in India, and after obtaining a peerage as the reward of serving the Government, died leaving a widow, who was the stoutest, and withal the gayest dowager in all Mayfair. Of the Honourable Jocelyn de Lancy, I will only say that he was one of those dissipated fellows, who imagine the chief glories of life consist in playing away vast sums at billiards and rouge et noir; in settling every dispute, however absurd, by a bet; in following every pretty woman he saw, and in squandering several hundreds per annum on actresses and ballet girls, in breaking windows and knocking down an occasional policeman; in having a heavy book on the Derby or the St. Leger; in knowing the point of every noted horse in the three kingdoms, and in keeping a beautiful yacht at Cowes. He believed the pinnacle of human happiness and vanity might be achieved by driving a four-in-hand drag filled with ladies, with his servant wearing a scarlet hat, and his friend, the Hon. Bill Boxley—the famous gentleman rider, blowing a trumpet behind; supping at three in the morning; breakfasting on a cigar and coffee between parades; dining at eight o'clock, and spending the night in every species of folly—such was the life of De Lancy—and such is the life of too many of “England’s honourable misters.” I was considering whether it was worth while to retort his impertinence about his hospitable entertainer, when just as a servant put some pigeon-pie before me, he said,

“You will be sorry, Hilton, for what has happened to my poor dog, Albert—he broke a leg under my horse this morning, and I had him flung into the river. A first-rate brute he was! killed a hundred rats in nine minutes last week.”

“Ah!—what was the bet?”

“A cool hundred—won by Bill Boxley, and thereupon, De Lancy, who was vulgar enough to patronize prize-fighters, and lost no small sum yearly in seeing them pound each other to jelly, entertained me (while dining on pigeon-pie) with a minute account of one of *the fancy*, whom he had seen in London, where with his hands tied behind, he had worried so many rats per hour with his teeth, to the great delight of many civilized Englishmen. I saw Langley, who was listening, smiling with something like contempt for the narrator, and I need scarcely say, that as my mind was occupied with very different subjects, the frivolous conversation around me was a bore.

“Were you at our match against the Marines and Rifles to-day, Frank?” asked Montague.

“No—neither at the rowing nor the cricket.”

“A thousand pities,” lisped De Lancy; “the rowing on the river was only equalled by the batting and balling on the Lines.”

“Yes, with the Rifles,” said Popkins; “but most of the salt-water fellows were quite out of practice; besides, the ground was rough and the runs were difficult.”

“Have you heard how the Prince of Wales’ Yacht-club match

came off yesterday, De Lancy?" asked the Honourable Mr. Morhew, an ensign who had just joined us.

"Admirably well! from Erith, round the Chapman Head and back again. But I have brought my yacht to the hammer. She won the Queen's gold cup last year."

"And you have sold her?" said the simple Popkins, who loved to imitate that reckless air which was only suited to De Lancy; "what a pity!"

"Deuce! you don't think I could take her out in the *Candahar*—eh?"

"I will buy her," said Morhew, "if my exchange into the Guards is permitted."

Mr. Morhew was the son of an Anglo-Irish peer, whose proper name was Murphy and O'Flannigan, who was a sterling Irishman of the right kind, had consequently a great contempt for our last addition, who had come to us fresh from Cambridge, and on his saying,

"O'Flannigan, can I assist you to anything?"

"Thank you, Mr. Morhew," said the captain, with one of his most impudent Irish leers, "I'll trouble you for one of *those gentlemanly murphies* in the side-dish, that *never* change their names."

The fashionable ensign gave him a spiteful glance, and assisted him to a potato in silence.

"Nice girl, she you danced with at old Palmer's, Montague," said De Lancy.

"Oh—ah—the dean's daughter—yes, only waltzed with her thrice though."

"Take care, Montague," said Langley, "for three round dances are equal to one engagement—pass the wine, O'Flannigan."

"The girl is dying with affectation," said Montague, who was one of the most sensible men at the table. "Poor Popkins was deeply smitten (see, he blushes as red as his coat!) Yet she is a mere bundle of white muslin and lace, and could speak only of the opera, the last new novel and piece of music. You would have ridden ten miles to have seen her dancing the mazurka with Popkins, when the work of the evening had become even hotter than snipe shooting in India. She promised to teach you crochet, I think, Popkins, did she not?"

The ensign's indignant dissent was interrupted by the captain of our Grenadiers, saying that he had seen her brother, "who was in the Royal Irish, drowned in the Hooghley, and aiten up alive by the alligators."

Then some one asked,

"Has Lumley of the Fusileers returned from leave yet?"

"Returned!" reiterated O'Flannigan; "he went to be married to £5000 a year—and it is his honey-moon he is on!"

"Ah!" lisped De Lancy, "that usually lasts longer in the country than in town. He was seriously engaged either to Letty Howard

or Blanche Palmer, but it was broken off when they tired each other."

"He retires, I presume," observed Langley.

"Probably," said the colonel, "a fine fellow, Lumley! knew him well at Poonah, when we were in the East."

(Considering what had passed in the forenoon all this was pleasant for me to listen to).

"Well," said Popkins, "may I be shot if I would give up the service for £5000 a year!"

Phil Popkins, a Londoner, was one of the best natured souls in existence, for he allowed the Irish captain of our Grenadiers to make perpetual fun of him, to borrow his money, smoke his cigars, and drink the cherry-tipple which his mother sent to him from her villa near Peckham Rye; and was moreover one of those kind souls who take all the trouble and responsibility of pic-nic and aquatic excursions; who take disagreeable partners off one's hands with the best grace possible; who would pass word to the bandmaster what polka or waltz you wished, and walked with the mother, or talked on missionary schemes to the aunt, when you wished to have the pretty daughter or flirting niece all to yourself. Popkins was invaluable! He played on the flute, was very sentimental, and sang a good song, generally of the very warlike cast; but his chief weakness was to imitate De Lancy. Thus, when that personage took it into his head to praise two nags which belonged to his esteemed friend Bill Boxley, Popkins said, rashly,

"I will bet fifty guineas that neither Lady Fanny nor Bay Middleton could trot a mile in the time mentioned!"

"Done, my boy! I take you—double if you like," drawled De Lancy, producing his betting-book, and poor Popkins, whose great ambition was to be thought a "fast man," (abominable phrase!) found himself obliged next day to hand over a check for the amount, a half year's pay, to the better informed De Lancy.

Just as Popkins was about to sing his invariable "Cigars and cognac," De Lancy and Montague rose to retire, having an engagement.

"Where away," said Langley; "why do you leave us so soon?"

"We are going to the Lumleys—they give a party to-night."

"Are those girls still in the market?" asked an officer, who had joined us from the Sixty-second; "faith! they were coquetting and tilting, backing and filling, when I was here eight years ago on my way to Madras."

"Don't half like these girls, though I go there," said De Lancy, who was always supercilious, "they are ever angling for husbands, and whenever one looks at them, they cast down their eyes, as if they wished to blush but could not do it."

"They tried hard to mesh poor Popkins," said O'Flannigan. "Did I not catch you in the very act of writing the prettiest of little notes on the very pinkest of paper, and like a wise man, put it in the fire, and saved your life, Popkins, you ungrateful bogtrotter."

"It is a thousand pities," lisped De Lancy, "you should have allowed it to go."

From a species of reverie into which I had fallen—if it was indeed possible to subside amid so much rattling and gaiety, I was roused by the voice of Langley, saying to an officer next him,

"Blanche Palmer is indeed a very fine girl, and has hair and skin which even the Empress Eugénie might envy; but yet, I do not think she can be compared to Lady Montessor, with *her* fine blue eyes and inimitable air. She was at the commandant's party on the night before last, and she and Blanche were twice vis-a-vis in the same quadrille. Their *styles* are altogether different."

I felt my heart stand still as he spoke, for I had been invited to the commandant's, but duty interfered, and thus I lost an opportunity of solving the grand mystery. At that moment, Fred's servant, who was dressed in very showy livery, approached with a salver, on which lay a very small note sealed with white wax. He opened, read, and pushed it across the table to me. It was an invitation to a *conversazione* at Lady Montessor's on the following evening, with an apology for the shortness of the invitation, and stating that it was quite an impromptu affair, and that she would be so happy if he would bring a friend.

"You will go of course, Frank," said Langley, as he stuck the note in his sash.

"With pleasure," I replied, while with a beating heart, and a head that almost swam, I rose from the mess-table, and sought the then deserted terrace, where I sauntered long alone, smoking a cigar under the old beech-trees, and thinking of Blanche, my engagement—my old love for the sweet, calm Cecil of my boyish days, and the task I had undertaken of besieging old Palmer on his return from London, where he had gone to attend a civic banquet.

CHAPTER X.

THE REVIEW—THE CREAM-COLOURED PONIES.

UNLIKE the most of review-days (which the fates generally ordain to be showery) the next morning, when we were to be inspected and reviewed by the commandant on the lines, was one of the finest of the month. The sky was without a cloud, and a little shower which had fallen before sunrise, brightened the hue of the summer grass, and drew a fragrance from the earth.

Bently, our adjutant, was indisposed, and begged that I would take his duty, offering me at the same time the use of his horse with its trappings and holsters; but I had still the control of Langley's blood mare, that fine animal which had produced so favourable an impression upon our elderly friend Mr. Palmer. Poor Bently! he

his since fallen in the Crimea, but I remember how we used to quiz him, and style his order book, "Bently's Miscellany."

I paraded the staff and formed the regiment in the Barrack-square, from which the colonel marched us out by the road that leads to Spur Battery, to St. Mary's Guard, and to *the Lines*, as those extensive fortifications which enclose a great tract of level ground and grassy sward are named. These lines are all well defended by strong ramparts, casemated and palisadoed, with drawbridges, ravelines, and deep ditches, which make Chatham (with the exception of Portsmouth) one of the most complete and regular fortresses in South Britain.

The scene was surpassingly gay and animated! The ground was kept clear for us by five hundred marines, who made free use of the butts of their muskets on the toes of those who pressed too far forward; the commandant and his staff had not yet appeared; but the regiment was formed in line, with the colours, band, and pioneers in the centre, the arms were "ordered," and the command given to "stand at ease." O'Hara was on horseback at our head, for he was now lieutenant-colonel, his predecessor, a very old officer (severely wounded in the Punjaub), having retired by the sale of his commission, when we received orders to hold ourselves in readiness for foreign service again.

The aspect of "the Queen's Own" was uncommonly fine. The clothing of the men was all new, and their lace was as spotless as their belts, while the long line of black knapsacks was so uniform and straight, that a long rod might have been laid over the tops of them all, and never have missed one; for it seemed as if every soldier, accoutrements and all, had been cast, like bullets, in the same mould. Our band was strong, and gaily dressed in white, faced and lapelled with red; their instruments were all new and of the brightest brass. We had a tall drum-major clad in gorgeous uniform with a bearskin cap and scarlet feather, which (together) were nearly three feet high. Popkins, who was enchanted to find so many ladies among the spectators, carried one colour, and the Honourable Mr. Morpew the other.

The bright sun of a meridian in June, poured down its unclouded lustre upon that flat but charming English landscape which spreads before the lines—a long expanse of fertile fields, with the pretty village of Gillingham, the Medway with its hulks, and the faint blue Thames afar off in the distance; and on the mass of glittering carriages and gaily dressed ladies, the various colours of whose bonnets, dresses, and parasols gave the extremity of the common the aspect of a long and brilliant flower border. It was a holiday in the dockyards, and these, with Chatham, Brompton, Gillingham, and Rochester, had united their thousands to see the review of "the Queen's Own," which was rather a favourite regiment—thus the crowd was beyond all conception dense, and the crush of carriages and horses about the saluting-post endangered the lives of all who

were on foot. There were several four-in-hand drags filled with dragoons and hussars from Maidstone, all in mufti; and other parts of the field exhibited vehicles of every description—as the song says—

“ Whisky, buggy, gig, dog-cart,
Curricie, and tandem.”

Reviews, like balls and evening parties, are all pretty much alike, so I need not trouble the reader with a long description of this one.

While waiting the arrival of the general and staff, a bustle on the extreme left of the lines attracted my attention, and I saw two marines and several men in the crowd forcing back—and very roughly too—a handsome little phaeton; and at a glance I perceived it was drawn by two cream-coloured ponies, driven by a lady, who wore a blue silk “ugly” over her white crape bonnet. Another lady sat beside her.

“Blanche, by the powers!” said I, putting the spurs into Fred’s mare in a style that made her bound six feet high, and dashed off at full gallop to rescue Miss Palmer from this rudeness, and to crave pardon for my negligence. “Hollo—hollo! what the deuce are you about there!” I exclaimed to the marines; “order your arms—fall back—let the ponies’ bridles go—these ladies are friends of the regiment.”

The marines respectfully begged pardon, and poked the butts of their muskets (without mercy) into the stomachs of those who had been making common cause with them in driving back the little phaeton. There was no time to lose! I took the bridle of one of the ponies, and brought the vehicle along the front of the whole line of carriages up to the very saluting-post, and wheeled it into the most conspicuous situation. I then turned to the fair driver in the blue shade, to give a word—only a word of greeting—when, how shall I describe my astonishment, my confusion, and my pain, to meet—not the bright smiling eyes of the gay Blanche Palmer, but the calm pale face, and saddened eyes of—Cecil Marchmont!

To me, it was like a face coming back from the grave. I sat for a moment on my charger trembling with doubt and irresolution—if there could be a doubt—but after murmuring her thanks, she resigned the white ribbons to the smart little tiger, who stood behind on the foot-board, and turned to address a lady friend, a most dashing looking woman, who sat beside her.

She had not recognised me. I lowered the point of my sword respectfully and reined back my charger.

“If she is not Cecil, the likeness is miraculous!” thought I, turning away; and lo! on the other flank of the lines, wedged up among a dense mass of country spring-carts and antediluvian gigs of the most homely description, I saw Blanche Palmer’s pretty little phaeton, with her favourite ponies, also *cream-coloured*. She had seen me make this unwonted display with Lady Montessor’s carriage, while

too apparently, I had not taken the least notice of hers. This was indeed a scrape!

"What will she think of me?" said I, aloud.

Though it was altogether improper for the acting adjutant to be scampering about the ground in such a manner, and at such a time, presuming on my intimacy with Colonel O'Hara, I was about to ride off, apologize to Blanche and procure for her a suitable position in the line; when lo! the bugle sounded; I saw ten or twelve cocked hats with plumes of white feathers dancing above the crowd, which parted like the waves of the sea, as the general (who was in advance of a glittering staff) came on the ground at a hard trot, and reined up at about eighty paces from the regiment. O'Hara who was now on foot and in front of the line, opened the ranks, and just as he gave the orders—"a general salute—present arms!" I got into my place.

A gleam passed along the line as the arms were presented, the officers saluting, the colours waving in front, and our magnificent band playing the national anthem, while the old general, Sir William W—, on whose breast the grand crosses of the Bath, Hanover, and the Tower and Sword, with many a medal, were sparkling, raised his cocked hat, and bowed his reverend head almost to the mane of his horse.

The arms were shouldered, the ranks closed, and O'Hara mounted; then came the inspection, while the band played the remarkable polka which was dedicated to *us* and to Blanche Palmer, in whose direction I scarcely dared to glance; then we marched past by open column of companies in quick and slow time, and performed all the intricate evolutions of a regular review—taking up all manner of alignements; firing by companies and rolling our volleys from flank to flank, to the great delight of everybody—and so, for two consecutive hours, we marched and countermarched, fired—deployed—and fired again, amid clouds of smoke, and I thanked Heaven when the whole affair was over, for though I would not consider myself second to any man in knowledge of my duty, such was the confusion of my thoughts, that I made the most stupid and absurd of adjutants. I had ridden over the colonel's orderly bugler, broken down three of the principal camp colours, curvetted over several baskets of ginger-bread, and made so many mistakes, that I nearly drove O'Hara demented: and the old general when complimenting the regiment, on "the manner it had acquitted itself," &c., remarked that he never saw an adjutant ride a horse so unmanageable as mine.

Whichever way I turned, I saw only the pale face and sad eyes of Cecil Marchmont, I mean—of Lady Montessor! My mind was filled by strange and tumultuous thoughts, and the inquiry, "Can she really be Cecil?" was ever on my tongue and in my heart; "but what boots it now?" I would add, as I thought of my engagement with poor Blanche, whom to all appearance I had so shamefully neglected to-day; and so she seemed to think, for just as I dis-

mounted in the Barrack-square, her "tiger" a smart little fellow clad in a grey surtout, breeches, boots, and waistbelt, put into my hand a note, evidently hurriedly pencilled on the leaf of a note book.

"Note from Miss Palmer, sir;" said the young jackanapes, touching his laced hat—"a small rod in pickle for you, sir, I think." It ran thus:

"Dearest Frank.—What *do* you—what *can* you mean by your conduct to-day? Is this the way you mean to love and to attend me? Come this instant and make an apology! You saw Lady Montessor's carriage plainly enough—then why not mine? Oh it was such an affront—before those odious Lumleys too! I am positively very much incensed, and you shall find that to-night at Gillingham, &c.

"BLANCHE PALMER."

I immediately despatched Buff on horseback with a suitable reply, and the most beautiful bouquet he could procure. These I would have borne myself, but the horrid general had to be accompanied round the soldiers' rooms, where he inspected all their kits, shirts, and brushes &c., with the minuteness of an appraiser.

"I am glad you were so attentive to Lady Montessor," said Fred Langley, when this duty was over; "I was delighted to see you give her so distinguished a position beside the commandant and the staff."

"Fred, pray tell me who *is* this Lady Montessor?"

"A charming young widow—plenty of money, and a fine estate. I would rather invest myself on her than on Blanche Palmer."

"All taste, my dear fellow," said I, drily.

"Her husband, who has been buried in Rochester Cathedral for four years and more, left her a jointure of £10,000 a-year."

"And she is a widow—ah, my heavens, should she prove to be Cecil after all!"

"What?" asked Fred, perplexed.

"Who was she, before marriage?"

"Some one's daughter in the North."

"The North—that is a relative term. You Englishmen call Yorkshire the North, and we in Scotland place it further off still."

"Don't know 'pon my honour—are you smitten? we shall inquire about her to night—but remember Blanche Palmer will be at Gillingham."

I had scarcely a moment left me for reflection, and perhaps it was fortunate, for my duties as acting adjutant fully occupied my time until the meeting of mess, where the commandant and garrison staff dined with us; so that the evening was considerably advanced before we left the dinner table; however, Langley and I excused ourselves and stole away; gave a finishing touch to our toilet, and as the evening was fine, we walked across the Lines—only a mile and a half—to Gillingham, near which lay the fine old mansion of Lady Montessor. As we approached it, how my heart beat for the issue of the coming introduction!

Situated among ancient copsewood the mansion was also very old,

with mullioned windows and clustered chimney-stacks. The walls were, as usual in England, of brick, with the corners and lintels of stone; but as the thick ivy clambered over the porch of carved oak and up the steep gables, a venerable and pleasing aspect was imparted to the old house which is said to have been the summer residence of the last catholic primate of all England, the ruined foundations of whose elder archiepiscopal palace are still visible not far from it. The mansion was pleasantly situated on an eminence, having on one side a view of the Thames and Medway with their banks of rich pasture land, and on the other the clean and pretty village of Gillingham (which is principally occupied by persons retired from dockyard service) and its fort, built by King Charles I. for defence of the river—without much utility, however, as the Dutch proved, in his son's time—and its ancient harbour, which was a place of some naval importance before England swelled up into Great Britain, when Chatham was in its infancy, and was but a cluster of little cottages—the *Cett-ham* of the Saxons.

CHAPTER XI.

LADY MONTRESSOR.

THROUGH an oak hall, floored with variegated tiles (after the indispensable ceremony of drinking coffee in a pretty little parlour), we were ushered upstairs into the outer drawing-room, the atmosphere of which was redolent of perfume and the fragrance of pastilles, and where the company were nearly all assembled, and conversing in groups, or hanging over books, prints, and little articles of vertu and bijouterie, to pass the time. The piano was open; a lady occupied the music stool, and near her was another who was touching and proving the strings of a magnificent harp. At a glance I perceived the former was Blanche Palmer, in a rich yellow satin dress laced with black, colours which well became her brilliant complexion and fine dark hair; the other was Letty Howard, all robed in snow-white muslin. Near them stood an officer in uniform with buff facings and a head of well curled hair. This was Letty's brother—Howard of the Third Buffs, or East Kent Regiment.

A number of pretty women, whom we had been meeting every night at different places since we marched into Chatham, and several officers in full uniform, with a few fashionable looking men in plain clothes formed the party.

"Here is Lady Montressor," whispered Langley, as he took my arm, and hurried me through the folding door. I felt giddy, confused, most unhappy, and scarcely dared to raise my eyes, for I believed that those of Cecil and Blanche were both upon me.

"Lady Montressor," said Fred, in his blandest tone, "allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Frank Hilton, of ours."

"Most happy to see you, Mr. Hilton, and hope to have you often at Gillingham," replied the lady, with a very sweet voice, but with a very insipid manner. From the little hand and arm of the most faultless form, which she had extended to me, with a trembling heart, I raised my eyes to meet those of Lady Montessor. She was a beautiful woman, of a most impressive presence, verging on thirty years of age, but she was *not* Cecil Marchmont! I was thunder-struck, but had no time given me for reflection; as she immediately added, "I owe you a thousand thanks my dear sir, for your great kindness, in procuring my carriage so good a position to-day. Oh the review was charming!"

"Thanks—Oh, Lady Montessor, you owe me none!" (none indeed, if she knew all!)

"But for you, Mr. Hilton, I don't know what my friend and I should have done—it was too kind!"

I bowed—got up a bland smile for the occasion, and mentally wondered who her *friend* was.

"And you like Chatham?" Her eyes always sparkled, and she showed her fine teeth when speaking.

"Like it—oh, exceedingly."

"Of course—all young officers do."

"Except those in the Provisional Battalion, who are the garrison slaves," said Howard, looking over his shoulder; "ah—how are you, Hilton—glad to see you again."

"And the maids of Kent, are, you know, the prettiest in all England. Miss Palmer is at the piano."

With this remark (which the said maids are careful to make to all who dance or flirt with them) our hostess moved away, with her bright sweet smile, her sparkling diamonds, and white satin rustling, to greet a more recent arrival in that warm manner with which she greeted all. In her face I could discern little, if any, resemblance to Cecil. She was a larger and darker woman, with more aquiline features, and a greater tendency to the most charming embonpoint than I could imagine Cecil to possess. Confounded by all this, I turned to ask some explanation of Fred Langley; but he had discovered a fair friend with long ringlets, and believing that after introducing me to our hostess, I was fairly off his hands, was carrying on a very animated conversation with her, in the recess of a window.

A *conversazione* is generally a stupid affair at best, and to young men in particular is not to be compared to a well assorted dancing party. At Lady Montessor's there was everything to attract. The drawing-rooms were magnificently furnished after an Indian fashion; the wax-lights in the crystal chandeliers and gilded girandoles shed a flood of lustre on the rich uniforms and epaulettes; the many bright complexioned and beautiful women, all radiant with pleasure and jewellery, and the hum of whose pleasantly modulated voices was so different from the noisy flirtations—the scene of fun, sack,

and destruction—the din and confusion of old Palmer's supper-room.

I now drew near Blanche with a very penitent air, though no way pleased to see Howard of the Buffs so busy about her, as our three names had been perpetually jingled together in that gossiping locality: but he turned away with a knowing smile as I approached the piano, on which she was performing one of those incomprehensible musical extravaganzas with which all well-bred people profess themselves enchanted, now-a-days, to the utter exclusion of all our good old Scots "and ancient English melodies," which of course "are banished out of doors."

I made several apologies to her, for my mistake in the morning; and although she knew very well that little was required, owing to the close resemblance her phaeton and ponies bore to those of our hostess, yet she was coquette enough never to honour me with any other reply than a slight nod of her pretty head, or a shrug of her white shoulders, as she turned away her face to conceal the smiles that dimpled it, and played her piece out to the end in silence, while I turned over the leaves for her.

On its conclusion, and the usual low hum of applause being given, she rose from the piano, and passed her hand confidently through my proffered arm in token that she had forgiven me.

"Now, Frank," said she, "you must be very good and attentive to me to-night, and thus make amends for your public affront and cruel neglect this morning."

"Dear Blanche—I have so often already expressed the regret I feel for my absurd mistake!"

I was not a little proud of her. She was decidedly the finest woman in the room, and the most splendid diamonds were sparkling on her breast and brow. She far surpassed our hostess, except in style, for there was a certain inimitable something in the bearing of the charming widow which, certainly, Blanche with all her loveliness could not attain. Miss Palmer was reputed to be enormously rich; it was said, moreover, that for me she had jilted poor Jack Howard of the Buffs; yet it did not seem as if Jack's heart ~~was broken in consequence~~, for he was the gayest man in the room except **Fred Langley**.

A certain piece of German music—a quartette—for four voices, was now proposed, and the ladies were all interrogated in turn, as to who could perform; three only were found; Lady Montessor, Blanche, and her friend and gossip Letty.

"What is the name of this composition?" I asked.

"I'll be hanged if I know," said Langley; "but I would a thousand times rather have a waltz with little Letty Howard. Very slow, all this sort of thing—it does not suit me at all!"

"How provoking!" said Lady Montessor, giving another sweep with her eye-glass round the ladies; we just require one voice, and my whole mind is set upon having this song to-night."

O'Flannigan, who had just come in, offered to do his best in Irish;

but none save Letty Howard would accept his services. During the pause which ensued the Honourable Mrs. Howard, a very haughty looking old dowager, wearing a most peculiar cap and rich black dress of enormous amplitude, observed to our hostess,

"Perhaps your Scotch governess sings in German?"

"Oh yes—admirably, indeed—as she does both in French and Italian; but——"

"Oh, then, do *desire* her to come in, and accompany the young ladies."

"I do not think she will like the invitation," said Lady Montessor, hesitating; "she is very gentle and retiring, and always avoids company."

"Of course; it is only becoming that she should do so—though some of those young persons are insufferably pert. I have never been able to retain one for Letty's little sister longer than a quarter, and frequently not so long. How fortunate *you* are, Lady Montessor! I always make *my* governesses very useful, if possible."

Lady Montessor, a most amiable woman, still hesitated, and all the ladies turned towards her.

"Bring in the girl, please," continued the obnoxious dowager, with a superb inclination of her short fat neck; "that is, if you do not think it too great an honour for her."

I think there was something in this remark that chilled every one present.

"Ah, my heavens—no! you quite mistake me, said our hostess, as she abruptly rang the bell, and a servant appeared. "Give my love to Miss —— (I did not catch the name), and say, John, that I will esteem it as the greatest favour if she will accompany me in a quartette, as we cannot perform it without her."

The man bowed and disappeared.

The ladies idled away over the piano, tinkling the keys, while the poor governess, thus commanded—for the invitation was but a command, however gently worded—was no doubt putting herself in order, to appear before so many brilliant guests.

"I am astonished that you keep a Scotch governess!" continued Letty's odious mother.

"And I have heard a Scotch lady express the same surprise at another for keeping an English one," replied Lady Montessor, with her quiet smile.

"But then her hideous patois—it will quite spoil your little girl."

"I have judged otherwise," said Lady Montessor, coldly, "and beside the poor thing leaves me in two days to sail by the Farnham Castle for India, where a more lucrative, and I sincerely hope, better situation, awaits her, for she has ever been to me a dear and affectionate friend. My little girl is going into a French convent for two years."

"Hark you, Frank," said Langley, as we passed into the next

drawing-room, "you cannot imagine how an exhibition, such as we are to have, pains me. On my honour, I would rather face a fire of musketry than, for one moment, be in the shoes of this poor governess. To be paraded thus, at old Dame Howard's suggestion too!"

"A demmed old squaw," said Popkins.

"I agree with you, Langley," said Montague, who was a fine-looking fellow, with deep thoughtful eyes, and firmly compressed lips; Hilton, is it not a strange contradiction in our nature, that with all our boasted humanity and civilization we choose an accomplished woman to train up our children in the way they should go, and expect her to instil into them the highest principles of honour, delicacy, and morality, and yet, like Mrs. Howard, we treat her as one inferior to ourselves in all things."

"Do not say *we*, Montague," said Langley, "for I never had any children, that I know of, and believe that if I had a governess, I should be very kind to her."

"Of course, if young and pretty," added O'Flannigan, "and so would I, and by my troth, I'll have a governess the moment I marry. I had an uncle who was so mighty kind to one, that he ran clean off with her, and never was heard of again!"

"I will tell you a rascally story of how one of the dragoons from Maidstone treated this poor girl," said Fred. "I heard it from Howard who had it from his sister Letty, and in the affair, Jack, notwithstanding his curled hair and his vanity, acted most nobly! Last year, Lady Montressor gave a splendid rout, and insisted on her governess, of whom she makes a friend, being present, and the girl being uncommonly pretty attracted a number of gay fellows about her; but she is proud enough and reserved enough to be a duchess—but these are additional incentives to some men. Among those who danced with her was a certain dragoon guardsman, whom she had known in other, and it would seem, in happier and better times. (Jack Howard told me the story very well.)

"The tears came into her eyes when she greeted him with all the warmth and kindness of an honest heart, for she had known him in other days when she had a home, and he had been an honoured and welcome guest at her father's house and table; and she thought that he, who had never known a bitter hour or endured the stings of poverty and mortification, would feel as *she* did at the meeting.

"But it was otherwise, for this guardsman was a thorough-paced libertine and cold man of the world; and if he betrayed satisfaction at meeting her, it was because she was in humble circumstances and reduced fortune, which placed her more at the disposal of such men as he. In other times he had been her lover and been twice rejected; but still her heart yearned to him as to a friend, and on seeing his face it seemed to be a gleam of home—the face of a friend—a brother, among all the cold ones who knew her not, or knew her only as a poor dependant on the purse and employment of others. Well, our

dragoon guardsman renewed his acquaintance, and dropped in here at Gillingham, frequently—so frequently indeed, that Lady Montessor advised Miss Marchmont——"

"*Marchmont?*" I repeated in a breathless voice, as I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and a terrible foreboding came over me "and *his* name?"

"Fetlock—the Honourable Charles Fetlock—a fashionable block-head, and great friend of De Lancy of ours," said Montague.

"Miss Marchmont was advised to be on her guard against the advances of such a person, unless his intentions were strictly honourable, when they might, to one in her situation, be worth considering; but she shrunk from them now, as she had done in better times. Fetlock craved an explanation with her, and they had an interview in this very drawing-room.

"With great cruelty and no small amount of art, he laid before her, and dilated on, all the mortifications, the real and imaginary discomforts of her position in life, with the probabilities of an unfriended old age, and poverty of which none could foresee the depth, the results, or the end; and thus artfully he succeeded in filling her mind with vague but terrible apprehensions, while he drowned the poor girl in a passion of tears.

"What would you have me to do, Captain Fetlock—what would you advise me to do?" she asked, 'you knew me when I had a splendid and a happy home, where I was sole mistress, and when I had a father who loved and protected me. Be now the friend you were then, and teach me how to shun the perils and sorrows you predict.'

"Come with me, Cecil—come to my arms—for I love you now, as I loved you then!"

"She sat still and immovable, but wept bitterly, while he placed an arm round her, and in her helpless sorrow she did not repel the freedom.

"I am rich, Cecil," he continued, 'my uncle, the earl, has left me a large fortune (ay—these were Fetlock's very words!) and it shall be shared with you. I will give you one of the handsomest houses in Kent—here beside us, or anywhere else you please. I will settle such a sum upon you as must render you for ever independent, if—if—'

"He paused, and tremblingly, she looked at him, and withdrew a little, for there was in his eye a libertine glance, such as no honourable man would have given at such a critical time—and there he sat, like a tempter, holding wealth in one hand and woe in the other!

"I can never marry you," said she, weeping still.

"Well—people need not marry," he replied, 'and without marriage, dearest Cecil, I still place myself and fortune at your disposal.'

"He said a few words more, which soon convinced the poor

crushed girl, that nothing was further from his thoughts than marrying her, and that now his *proposals* were such as in her father's time he never would have dared to conceive! Poverty and dependence had somewhat crushed her pride of bearing, but not her spirit of honour or purity of soul. She drew herself up to her full height; she gave the recreant a glance of scorn that made him quail before her, and clenching her little hands in silent agony, as if she would have struck him to the earth, left the room, with the air of an insulted empress.

"This affair soon reached the ears of Jack Howard, and as he had been the medium of introduction, he considered himself insulted—or generously wished to punish the fellow, for affronting so noble a girl, and so he called Fetlock out. Though the General Order consequent to Munro's duel with Fawcett of the Fifty-fifth, was fresh in all our minds, they were to have fought in the fields behind Fort Pitt, when, luckily, a sudden route came! Jack was dispatched to Tilbury, and Fetlock had to embark for Bengal, on obtaining his majority and a staff appointment—and if an Indian bullet ends his career, he will be no loss to the Dragoon Guards, believe me."

CHAPTER XII.

THE QUARTETTE.

I LEAVE my reader to imagine all I felt while Fred Langley related, and with considerable tact and animus, this story, in the back drawing-room, where we were almost alone. Just as he concluded, a door opened, and a young lady entered, who with a slightly indicated bow to us as guests of the house, passed through the gilded folding-doors into the brilliant inner room, where Lady Montessor took her by the hand and led her towards the beautiful group which clustered about the open piano.

She was Cecil Marchmont!

It were vain to analyse all I thought, and all I felt at that moment. My voice was gone, and my heart seemed ready for bursting; the atmosphere was close and stifling, and I seated myself upon a sofa, while Langley, Montague, and O'Flannigan drew nearer the piano and the fair performers. Blanche and Letty Howard were seated at the instrument. Lady Montessor and Cecil stood behind them, and were preparing to sing.

I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the face and form of poor Cecil, as she passed before me like a spirit, without even a glance of recognition. Her pure profile and pale, very pale complexion, made her deep-blue eyes, black brows and lashes, and her rich brown hair seem almost black; her forehead was sad, but the expression of her finely formed mouth was as sweet, perhaps sweeter

than ever. Her hair was plainly braided, with a single white rose, placed there, no doubt, hurriedly, and her dress of black satin, with a low body and short sleeves, showed the fair proportion and whiteness of her delicate arms and shoulders. She seemed fuller, even taller than when last I saw her; yet she was the Cecil of my early days, and my young heart went back to its first love and the beloved times of old with a sad, a sorrowful, and sickening emotion.

And there beside her was Blanche Palmer, so beautiful, so brilliant, and so happy! I felt that all my sudden passion for *her* had subsided in five minutes down to mere friendship at the sight of Cecil; and that she, and she only, was the love, the light, and guiding star of my heart, and no other woman in England or in Scotland either: and now they were all singing together, and the melody of their beautiful voices as they rang along the gilded ceilings and wainscoted rooms of that old English hall was charming, but Cecil's was the sweetest to me; and I was impatient when for a moment it was drowned by the singing of others, and I thought of what the emotions of the proud old colonel—he who was so vain of his beautiful daughter and vaunted so much of her accomplishments—would have been, could he have seen her reduced to the necessity of "making herself useful," as old Dame Howard phrased it; and that to those very accomplishments she was to owe her daily bread; and I thought it well that the passionate old man was sleeping far away, in his green grave in the old kirk-yard at Aikendean.

When the quartette was concluded, Lady Montessoro kissed Cecil, and Blanche and Letty Howard, the frankest of all frank girls, warmly praised her execution of her part, and then they insisted upon her singing something alone, to which she at once conceded.

As her fingers ran over the ivory keys, I knew by the prelude that she was about to give them one of our native Scottish songs which I had often heard her sing in other times; and as she progressed, every note and word, with her dear familiar voice, called up the past and obliterated the present. It was one of poor Motherwell's, and is half forgotten already.

"The bloom hath left thy cheek, Mary,
As the spring's ripe blossoms die;
And sadness hath o'ershadowed now
Thy once bright hazel eye:
But look on *me*—the prints of grief
Still deeper lie.—Farewell!"

As she sang with inexpressible tenderness the six verses of this sad and beautiful song, I thought that at times her voice grew tremulous, and I was deeply—oh! how deeply moved.

"Would that our love had been the love
That merest worldlings know;
When passion's draught to our doomed lips
Turns all to utter woe,
And our poor dream of happiness
Has vanished so.—Farewell!"

"But in the wreck of all our hopes
 There's yet some touch of bliss,
 Since fate robs not our wretchedness
 Of this last parting kiss:
 Despair and love and sadness meet,
 My Mary, dear, in this.—Farewell!"

The whole room was hushed as she concluded this sad, low, wailing air, and then a burst of applause louder than good breeding usually accords was awarded to her, and none were more loud than Lady Montessor and O'Flannigan, who sprang forward to offer his arm, and told her that she was "a perfect jewel."

"This young *person* is very accomplished," said Mrs. Howard, to a lady beside her, "but with a daughter growing up, I would not like a governess half so young or half so pretty. It sometimes proves very inconvenient."

I drew near, and it seemed so strange that I should be beside Cecil in the same room and breathing the same air with her—to be almost touching her dress, and yet, that we were not as we were once, when we rambled in the woods of Fairy Bank, and when many a time I had borne her in my arms through the deepest part of the mountain stream, to save her the trouble of a circuit to the Fairy-bridge, when we had loitered too long and heard the bell ringing for dinner, or the old colonel holloing for us in the lawn. She glanced at me once or twice in the same casual manner that she did on other guests, but without the least recognition, for she could not even know that I was in existence; but no doubt my uniform, the gold medal and green ribbon I had received for the war in India—my service there, which had bronzed my face and given a strength and compactness to my altered figure, had made me seem altogether different from what I was. The conversation became general, and though I longed to address her—yea, as if my life depended upon it—I had not the courage to do so. I dreaded that a scene might ensue; besides, I felt that, by the mere force of circumstances over which I had no control, I was now acting dishonourably to Blanche, and was even then, by total neglect, using her very ill; and so she seemed to think, for she looked at me once or twice with an expression of anything but pleasure, while rambling over the keys of the piano and maintaining an idle and gay conversation with Howard and another officer of the Buffs.

"Why are you avoiding me?" she asked, sharply, as I drew to her side.

"Avoiding you—I—Blanche?"

"You have never been near me to-night. Have you nothing to say to me, after your conduct this morning?"

"I was just about to remark, how beautifully Miss Marchmont sang!"

"Is *that* all you have to say to me? How tiresome and how silent you have become!"

"Silence is often reverence, dear Blanche," said Letty Howard.

"And reverence in love is most commendable," added Lady Montessor.

"Dumb reverence is all bosh and folly," said Blanche, pettishly, as she took Jack Howard's proffered arm for a promenade round the room, gave him her fan and bouquet to carry, and left me without a nod or smile.

When supper was announced, I stood like one bewildered; I was close by the side of Cecil, when duty required that I should be with Blanche. In such cases, and with such attractive girls, to loiter for a moment is to lose them! Howard offered his arm; O'Flannigan led the graceful hostess; every one conducted some one else, and Lady Montessor on seeing me standing thus irresolutely, said in passing, with an introductory bow,

"Mr. Hilton of 'the Queen's Own'—Miss Marchmont—supper waits us."

Cecil placidly took my trembling arm, and timidly made some commonplace remark, and I know not what answer I returned as we descended to the supper-table in the dining-room below.

CHAPTER XIII.

CECIL!

I SEATED myself beside her at a corner of the supper-table, and not far from O'Flannigan of ours, who generally contrived to slide into the position of acting host in the houses of all widows—and a most efficient one he made. I assisted Cecil to various things and filled her glass with wine, for Lady Montessor was somewhat old-fashioned, and this duty was not left to servants. It was evident, by the perfect ease of Cecil's manner, that she never recognised or even thought of me. This became quite insufferable! so taking advantage of the buzz of gay unmeaning nonsense around us, a running fire of conversation on the last novels, routs to come, fashionable music, races, and balls, with flirtation in all its phases and stages, I said, close in her ear, and in a low but agitated voice,

"Miss Marchmont—oh, Cecil! have six years and this uniform so changed me, that you have quite forgotten poor Frank Hilton—the manse of Aikendean, and the bonnie braes of Fairy Bank?"

She dropped her silver fruit knife and turned to me with an air which I shall never forget, for I never saw a face which so suddenly and so powerfully expressed the varying emotions of astonishment, joy, profound sadness, and then perplexity, as that of Cecil; astonishment to hear an old familiar voice uttering her name, and joy to see a once beloved face; sadness to reflect on all that was passed away, and the relation in which we then stood to each other, with something of timid perplexity lest she might cause that, of which we well-

bred Britons have such an innate horror—a *scene*; but I pressed her hand to reassure her.

As the shadow of a cloud passes from the bosom of a lake, or the breath from the purer surface of a mirror, these expressions passed from her face as the emotions subsided in her breast, and her eyes resumed their wonted sadness, not unmingled with a keenness of gaze, as she asked in a low voice, tinged with somewhat of reproach, after some broken exclamations—

“Oh, Frank, and are *you the* Mr. Hilton who is to marry Miss Blanche Palmer?”

“I—Miss Palmer—marry—oh, Cecil!”

“Hush, for here are many listening ears and observant eyes. And you are in the army, too! Oh, Mr. Hilton, how I long to learn all that has befallen you since—since—”

“Since I left dear Aikendean,” said I, becoming rather more composed, for the admirable and ladylike placidity of *her* manner soon impressed me; “a few words, dearest Cecil, will soon do all that.”

I briefly sketched out my career, from the time of the unfortunate accident which involved me so seriously with the Honourable Captain Fetlock; my volunteering, and service in India; and her eyes filled with tears of mingled sorrow and affectionate pleasure when I concluded. My low earnest voice had not failed to attract the ears of one whom, in the gush of other thoughts and the memory of other times, I had altogether forgotten; and just as I brought my short story to a close, I discovered that the bright keen eyes of Blanche Palmer had been fixed upon me from time to time with an expression of a somewhat doubtful cast, which gradually assumed that of disdain and inquiry; and it was a great relief to me when some of the company had their carriages announced, and others began to reascend to the drawing-room, whither we followed them.

I lingered with Cecil in the library beyond the folding door; love, interest, pity, and compassion, all united to chain me to her side, and I cared not a straw for what any one thought.

The accents of her soft and sweetly modulated voice fell like old music on my listening ear, and the sobs she could ill repress at times made all she said the more mournfully impressive.

“Mr. Hilton——”

“For the love of Heaven, dearest Cecil, at a time like this, do call me as of old—Frank—I am Frank Hilton—to you the same Frank Hilton as ever!”

My heart was trembling, and brimful. Oh, how easily an old love like this revives in all its strength and purity!

“When my dear father died, Frank, I felt that I was indeed! alone; that among all the myriads of the earth there was not one heart that mourned with me; not a hand that would clasp mine; not a home that would receive me! I felt that I was poor—very, very poor! Even that English clergyman whom my father’s interest had raised to a place in the Scottish Episcopal Church, turned from

me, and was cold, cutting, supercilious, and ungrateful, because I was poor; and your good old father's successor at the manse was equally so, because I was, as he said, a sheep that belonged unto another fold. A melancholy, a terrible prospect was now before me, for I had been reared in the midst of luxury and wealth, affection and ease. A creditor of my father, out of mere charity—"

"Charity—oh, Cecil—such a word!"

"Yes," she continued, with something of bitterness, "if I can so term that dubious sentiment which makes some men do an act of seeming kindness merely lest they should be stigmatized as cruel. Well, this gentleman obtained for me a situation where my accomplishments might render me useful, and afford me that bread and raiment of which misfortune had deprived me. I endured much—many bitter neglects and keen mortifications. I have had many *homes* since then, until my good angel brought me to Lady Montessor, and here I have been for two peaceful—if not happy—years; but as her daughter goes to Paris, I have made an engagement in Bengal, and sail from Gravesend in two days."

Bengal! Fetlock was there on the staff; and though her coolness of demeanor was all assumed, as her sad, earnest, and anxious eyes, her pale and quivering lips, informed me, I could not help feeling hurt and pained at an idea, which, however, I immediately dismissed.

"Dear, dear Cecil," said I, pressing her hands in both of mine, as we promenaded round the (otherwise) empty back drawing-room to avoid observation; "praise be to Heaven that I have found you!"

"Oh, Frank, if you knew—if you knew all, you would pity me; my heart was never a proud one, but now it has been brought low indeed! Sores have been tried—sorely schooled by bitter adversity. Six years have passed since we last met—long, heavy, and desolate years have some of them been—years of weeping, repining, and mortification, and of sad memories of that happy past which can never more return. I am on the eve of embarking for India, Frank, so we meet but to part again, and most probably for ever!"

"Part, Cecil! Have you quite forgotten all that we were once to each other?"

"I have not—I never will," said she, looking at her hand, on which I could perceive a ring I had given her when she was quite a girl. "Oh, Frank, well indeed did I love you, nor will I deny that in those days you were most deserving of that affection—but—but look into your own heart, and say if *now* there are not reasons why you be so loved no more?"

"Reasons—Cecil?" I reiterated, and then became silent, for I knew that she referred to *Blanche*, who was again at the piano, with a few of the guests who still were lingering, and to whom she was playing an accompaniment for *Howard*, who was singing: but I was weak enough to affect a belief that she meant the unfortunate accident which had embroiled me with her fiery father and the fashionable Captain Fetlock.

"Yes, reasons, Frank : but we will attract attention by conversing longer here—indeed, Mrs. Howard has thrice looked this way already. We part, as we met, Frank Hilton, like friends ; now leave me—I will retire to my own lonely room."

"One word, Cecil ; can you still believe me capable of that alleged crime which banished me from your presence and from my home?"

"No, Frank ; though love and jealousy embitter sorely the human heart, I do not think so of you ; yet Captain Fetlock, at a moment when he believed himself dying, declared that you had threatened to assassinate him, and moreover, that he saw you distinctly level your gun at him, and fire."

"The false villain ! would that he were here, that I might tear the truth from his heart ! But ah, Cecil, that was a cruel letter you wrote to me."

"Upbraid me not with what was written under my poor father's dictation—the combined effects of terror and despair."

"My poor Cecil—ah, how much I love you ! The dear memories your sweet voice, your eye and your figure bring back to my heart ! I thought I had learned to be content—but alas, Cecil ! Did you really love that man, Fetlock ?"

"Oh !" she said, with a shudder, and an angry flash in her eyes.

"And you have schooled yourself to love me no longer ?"

"You might know me better, Frank, than to deem such schooling would be pleasing ; but I thought that you—you—were dead, or gone I knew not whither."

"And you still think me capable of the crime alleged to me?"

"Oh—no—no—I—to-morrow, to-morrow we will speak of this—to-night it is impossible !"

A passionate fit of grief overpowered her, and she hurried away from the room ; while I—perplexed and miserable, so that I knew not whether my head or my heels were uppermost—rejoined the remnant of the gay and brilliant company in the inner drawing-room ; but I seemed still to hear that soft and well-remembered voice, which came back to me like some old and beloved air, waking a thousand dear and dreamy recollections, and kindling emotions too sad, too tender and touching, to be described to another.

"'Pon my soul, you are a fine fellow !" said Langley, in a whisper ; "have you taken leave of your wits, Hilton, to be making such desperate love to that pretty governess all night ? Howard's mother twice drew all eyes towards you."

I made a reply no way complimentary to that elderly female, and looked round the room in vain for Blanche, but encountered only the wicked eyes of Letty Howard.

"Where is Miss Palmer?" I asked her.

"Gone—her carriage was announced a quarter of an hour ago."

"The deuce—and who saw her into it?"

"One of the Hussars from Maidstone—a particular friend of my brother Jack."

"And where is *he*?"

"Gone, too, I think," replied Letty, briefly, as she spread her thick flounces over the scarlet piano stool; and seating herself, began the extraordinary prelude to some sentimental piece of Italian twaddle; but bidding adieu to Lady Montressor, to Fred and others, I hurried home to the barracks on foot, in a state of perplexity, and with a mind varying between the promptings of honour and inclination. Between Blanche Palmer and Cecil Marchmont the pendulum did not vibrate long, for the passing flirtation and half-jesting engagement with Blanche, though it might, could, and *should* have ended in matrimony, sank into mere nothingness before the young first passion of my heart for the Cecil of Fairy Bank.

In the three hours of that short night I had lived all my life over again.

CHAPTER XIV.

IRRESOLUTION: AN ELOPEMENT.

I COULD not sleep, and until day dawned saw ever before me, in the darkness of my barrack room, those calm sweet eyes, so black in their blueness, and shaded by their long lashes; and ever and anon her plaintive voice came with startling distinctness to my ear, as I had last heard it,—"*To-morrow, to-morrow, we will speak of this—to-night it is impossible!*" And I remembered the happy girl I had first known at Aikendean, so petted, loved, and cherished, as an only daughter is; and the deep passion of my ardent boyhood—that passion which had neither thought nor hope but in her presence, her happiness and regard—that early love, in which the regard of a brother for a sister mingles so much with the emotion of a lover for his idol, rose again within me as it were from its ashes. I contrasted what she was, with her present homelessness, her friendlessness, and the dependence of that dubious condition which exposed her to the insulting remarks of an old and cross-grained dowager like Mrs. Howard; or the infamous proposals of a reckless roué and libertine like Fetlock of the Dragoons, and I writhed on my bed with bitterness and anger.

Then I thought of her long voyage alone; oh, it was not to be contemplated with patience. If she had been going out with us in the Candahar! was my next reflection; but she sails on the day after to-morrow, in another ship.

The image of Blanche, so gay, so giddy, so rich, and so beautiful, when contrasted with the pale and sad dependent of Lady Montressor—so crushed in spirit, and blighted in hope, made me have less repugnance in announcing to her that I could not fulfil my engagement, with justice to her, or with honour to myself. My spirits rose as I came to this conclusion; and starting from bed when the drums

seat *réveille*, I walked in the bright summer morning round the dewy Lines, that I might again see the chimneys of the house where Cecil slept, and so wile away the time until I could meet Fred Langley, and further fortify myself with the benefit of his advice. He was in the act of shaving when I entered his room.

"Well, Frank," said he, half-gravely, half-comically, "'pon my honour you behaved shamefully at Montessor's, last night; you will get me struck off her invitation list, and old Palmer's, too! However," he added, resuming his operations, which he had suspended for a moment; "it wont matter, perhaps, as the Candahar will be down the river next week, and you'll miss having a wife who has flirted with every man between Chatham and Chillianwallah."

"Shamefully, Fred, how have I behaved so?"

"Why, you cut Blanche Palmer, dead, three times last night, though every one says it is an engagement between you; and you made the most desperate and palpable love to that sly little governess in the back drawing-room—never saw such a thing done so coolly before. (She sang divinely, though, that little Scotch affair!) And Howard's mother—I wish you had heard *her* comments."

"Ah, Fred, if you knew all—and how I loved this girl years ago—"

"When you joined here in Chatham, a Johnnie-raw, I suppose. Take my advice, and have nothing to do with her, for she cannot care for you now, though, womanlike, she would wish to have some hold even upon a discarded lover; but I cannot suppose that *you* were that."

"Thank you, Fred, but——"

"You have nothing—excuse me—but your pay, and Buff's splendid and most baronial-looking suit of livery, and yet would propose to a governess," continued Fred, in his bantering way; "my dear fellow, the thing is not to be thought of; the age of chivalry is gone, and love matches went out with it. In spite of what the Chinese say, we free-born Britons claim the right of being wiser than our respected fathers. But you will breakfast with me—my servant makes coffee like a Turk, and devils drumsticks to admiration—we'll talk the matter over. Think of Blanche Palmer's funded property—the villa—the carriage and bays, the phaeton and cream-coloured ponies, and those blessed coal-pits in the midland counties—or at least dismiss both Miss P. and Miss M. from your thoughts until *after* the route comes, and then write passionate and sorrowful farewells to them both. I'll help you—I am first-rate at all that sort of thing."

After I had related to Fred the circumstances under which I first knew Cecil Marchmont, the accident which had separated us, and all the other incidents with which the reader is already acquainted, up to the time of her leaving me last night, his manner entirely changed.

"Oh, by Jove," said he, jumping off the barrack table, on which he

had seated himself after completing his toilet; "this alters the case altogether. Poor little thing! how I wish I knew her better—Cecil—a pretty name, too!"

"Well, and what do you advise?"

"You know, Frank, I never advise any friend to marry until he cannot help it—for a few married men in a regiment play the devil with the mess, and add immensely to the heavy baggage—but were I in your place, I would certainly marry Cecil Marchmont, and take her out with the corps—and would she not be a credit to it?"

"Marry her—that is, if she will have me."

"Never doubt it—what, in her position?"

"Flattering to me—but you forget, Fred, that with all her gentleness, she is proud as Lucifer——"

"All you devilish Scotch people are."

"Take care, Fred, there are a couple of swords on that peg."

"Beg pardon, Frank, but it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I was a year on the staff in Edinburgh, and never met so much absurd pride in all my life; and the less right a man had to be proud, the more pride he possessed. But about Cecil——"

"She must have heard my name coupled with that of Blanche Palmer."

"I wonder who has not? Why, every one between Stroud-quay and Brompton barrack-gate knows more about it than you do yourselves, and you ought to feel grateful to them, for they have fixed your marriage day, and arranged that you give a grand dinner to the garrison, and a ball at Rochester—fact! I heard all this canvassed very freely by two old tabbies in a corner at Montessor's, last night, while you were oblivious of it all in the back drawing-room; and that time Jack Howard was not idle, you may depend upon it, for he was pushing on his parallels in great style. But never mind Blanche or her coal-pits (by-the-bye, I should not mind looking after them myself?), do as honour dictates, and marry Cecil Marchmont, if she will take you, and I am your right-hand man for the wedding party, and will hold your glove and vinaigrette on the trying occasion."

The moment our coffee, the devilled drumsticks, and the morning parade were over, I hurried to my quarters, and knocked up for Buff, for the officers' barracks in Chatham have their kitchen *above* for the upper floor, and below for the ground floor; and as the parsimonious Board of Ordnance would all rather die than give bells to any one under the rank of colonel, the simple mode of summoning one's servant is by thundering with a poker (often snatched red-hot from the fire) on the floor, if your man is in the sunk story, or if upstairs on the dormant beam which traverses the ceiling, and bears the marks of as many blows as there are stars in the sky. Thus summoned, Private Benjamin Buff appeared, with a face expressive of surprise at my impatience.

I desired him to get me a horse saddled, and lead him up without moment's delay. It was soon done, and in ten minutes I was out of the barrack-square, clear of the fortifications, and galloping along the narrow and crowded streets of Chatham and Rochester. I soon crossed the bridge, turned off to the left, ascended the bank of the Medway, reached Palmer's villa, and dismounted with a beating heart, for the advice of Langley, the duties of the morning parade, and excitement of the early ride kept my spirit up to the mark; but an emotion of shame at the ungracious object of my mission, and another incapacity of arranging what I was to say, made my heart fail for a moment, and nothing nerved it but the remembrance of poor Cecil, so sad and so forlorn at Gillingham.

I rang the bell repeatedly before any one appeared, and instead of the powdered servant in showy livery, it was an old house-keeper, whose aspect was as much confused as that of the villa, for by various indications about the entrance hall and front drawing-room windows, it was evident that something was wrong.

"Is Mr. Palmer at home?"

"No, sir."

"Miss Palmer, then?"

"Sir—" stammered the woman, with an air of perplexity. I drew my bridle-rein through an iron ring in a column of the verandah, and was advancing to the door, when the startled aspect of the woman arrested me.

"Take up my card, if you please, and say that Mr. Hilton begs a short interview with Miss Palmer. But what the devil is the matter, my good woman?" I added, with an emotion of remorse on seeing her beginning to weep; "good Heaven—Miss Palmer is ill!"

"Oh no, sir—but—but——"

"But what—speak, woman?"

"At daylight this morning she 'loped with Mr. 'Oward, of the Buffs, and is gone no one knows where."

"Whe-e-eu!—what—eloped?"

"Clean gone away, sir—portmanteau, jewel-box, and all—a carriage and pair were waiting for her on the Stroud road, at the foot of the avenue."

"And her father?"

"Is after them by the railway to London—for they took the Gravesend road. Oh, he is a willan, sir, is that Mr. 'Oward, and my poor master could never a-bear him."

With sensations of a somewhat mingled cast, I galloped back to the barracks, where the news of Blanche's elopement arrived almost as soon as I, for in a garrison town such chit-chat travels faster than light. Notwithstanding that I had no right to expect any better treatment at her hands, that the elopement was a sudden riddance for ever of my hasty engagement, and that my heart had turned more fondly than ever to Cecil,—with that delightful consistency which some female writers ascribe to all the male species, I could not help

feeling a little piqued and mortified by the manner in which Blanche had gone off—the abrupt announcement of the old housekeeper was so different from the pathetic interview of tears, reproaches, and hauteur for which I had nerved, schooled, and prepared myself.

Dismounting at the door of Langley's quarters, I sprang up the wooden stair to his room, and in a few words told him all, on which he did nothing but laugh at me immoderately.

"Fred, this is intolerable; all Chatham will be laughing at me, too," said I.

"Yes, and Rochester, Stroud, and Brompton—and those d—d fellows of the Buffs, more than all, for one of them having out-flanked a man of 'the Queen's Own'—ha! ha!"

"Hallo, Langley, have you heard the news?" cried O'Flannigan, with his Irish shout, as he put in his well-whiskered face at the door. "Oh, how are you, Hilton? So she is off, clever and clane! But never mind, Frank, my boy, there is good fish in the say as ever came out of it, though maybe there are no coal-pits down there. But what the blazes do *you* want with a wife, for ten good years to come, yet? To be sure, the money, the elegant phaeton, and those darling ponies, were something; but now they all go to Howard, and the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, as the lawyers say. Have you any cigars? (I have smoked Popkins clane out). Be thankful, my boy, that she eloped before marriage, rather than *after*; for that would have been a fine piece of business, entirely!"

Knowing how much of this kind of consolation I might have to endure, I sent Buff with my compliments to O'Hara, and obtaining leave from evening parade, rode over to Gillingham, to leave my card at Lady Montessor's. Her ladyship was from home, seeing poor Miss Marchmont off for London, as her ship, the Farnham Castle, sailed next day; and the servant wept as she told me this, for Miss Marchmont had been *so* kind to all the household, and given to each a small *souvenir*, that they might remember her.

Her words sank deeply into my heart. Poor Cecil! She was, then, fairly away from me. I would have thrown myself into a railway carriage and followed, but I was in orders as member of a court-martial *next day*, and to leave was impossible! I thought my brain would turn with so many perplexities.

Full of bitter and melancholy thoughts, I gave my horse the reins, and allowed him to wander for miles along the chalky and flinty roads; and the evening sun began to sink behind the clusters of small eminences which are the principal features of a Kentish landscape, and which seem so flat and insipid to the eye of a mountaineer, though in summer they are clothed with the most luxuriant verdure, and are thickly dotted by flocks of sheep and herds of browsing cattle.

It was night when I returned to the silence and solitude of my own room, and, throwing myself into bed, endeavoured to court sleep, and slowly and tardily it came.

CHAPTER XV.

A LETTER—THE ROUTE.

FROM dreams disturbed by many an undefined vision of Cecil, and what was once my home in happier times, I rose next morning, when Buff presented me with a letter, which he said the drum-major (who usually acts as regimental postman) had brought over night, and which had been unnoticed by me before retiring to bed.

It bore the Sheerness post-mark, and was from Cecil, for though her writing was changed, I could still recognise it, and my heart stood still as I opened and read it. Already!—it was dated on board the Farnham Castle, yesterday forenoon, and stated that by the time I received it, she would be fairly under weigh for India, as a steamer was tugging the vessel to the Nore, and would there cast her off, and to the master of the tug she would entrust this farewell letter.

It was a sad memento, and as it was never meant for other eyes than mine, I can only venture on giving an outline of it here.

She wrote that she was going far, far away, to where I would never hear of her again; that her heart, which, until our meeting at Lady Montessor's, had been content, if it was not happy, was now wild with misery, at the contemplation of all that *might* have been, had we both been born under happier stars. And the solemn conviction that she was now leaving Britain, most probably for ever, and leaving behind not one heart that truly yearned, or an eye that wept, for her, increased her bitterness. That all perhaps was for the best, though we were too short-sighted to perceive it, much better than if she had remained in Chatham, after discovering that *the* Mr. Hilton, who was engaged to Miss Palmer, was the Frank Hilton whom she had known and learned to love in her father's home in dear old Aikendean—that she feared much she would never survive until the end of that long and dreary voyage, the length and distance of which she contemplated with horror and aversion;—that even if I would have loved her again—(again! ah! dear Cecil, my heart had never forgotten you!)—she would not have one whose breast had been filled, even for a time, by the image of another; that she would not *now* be stooped to, as it were, when she could live by the fruit of her own industry. (Here her letter became a little incoherent.) She prayed that God might bless me; that many years might yet be in store for me, and that Blanche Palmer, when she became my wife, would love me as I deserved to be loved.

So closed this bitter letter, through the thin veil of which her love for me, her subdued regret that I had apparently forgotten her for another, and the keen repining that her poor heart could not repress, were so painfully visible. She had appeared before me, and gone like a spirit. I reproached myself most bitterly for not having

procured another interview at all hazards before she could have left Gillingham; a thousand things I might have said to detain her now occurred to me; and the idea that she was *gone*—and gone with the conviction that I was callously about to be wedded to another and a richer rival—stung me to my inmost heart, for I might never have the opportunity, even by letter, of undeceiving her.

And with these sad and bitter convictions in her desolate heart, this poor being had departed on a far and perilous voyage alone—on a journey which would too surely separate us for ever, for India seems like half a world. For a moment the jealous and ungenerous fear came over me, that in India, where white beauties are so scarce and valued, or even during the long monotonous voyage, she might meet some one handsome enough or rich enough to tempt her by marriage to seek revenge and independence together. In Bengal she might meet Fetlock, and if he repented—but no! I knew Cecil Marchmont too well to be aware that I had anything to fear from him. My reflections were of the most distracting kind, and they were in no way soothed by that provoking fellow, Popkins, who occupied the next room, where he took lessons on the flute from our bandmaster; and though he had about the same taste for music that a cow might be supposed to possess, his task usually began with *réveille*, and did not always end with tattoo. Langley and I had frequently abstracted his flute, but he always provided another; and now, on this eventful morning, he nearly drove me frantic by his incoherent but determined efforts to accomplish the first few bars of "God save the Queen."

One only hope remained to me, that our regiment, which was under orders for the East, might be sent to Bengal, but that slender chance was soon dissipated.

Unable to encounter the light-hearted frivolity of the mess, the speculations consequent to Blanche Palmer's elopement, with O'Flannigan's jokes thereon, and Popkins' eternal song about "Cigars and Cognac," or De Lancy's lisping about the good points of "Surplice," that won the Derby, or of "Bay Middleton," that won the St. Leger, and why the "Queen of Sheba" was struck out of her engagements at York and Chester, and so forth, I was resolving to be unwell for one day and busy the next, and considered how to dispose of myself for the third, when all trouble was saved me by Buff appearing when I sat at my coffee.

"The adjutant's compliments, sir," said he, "the route has come."

"*The Route!* for where?"

"Aden, on the Red Sea."

"Aden—the devil! do you say so—I thought we were going to Bengal. Are you certain?"

"It *is* Aden, sir, on the Red Sea; for I heard Mr. Popkins ask if it was the place where the red herrings came from, and Captain O'Flannigan said *yes*, that an uncle of his lost a fortune there in

speculating on them. The Candahar will be off Gravesend to-morrow by day-break, at which time we march from this; the bugle has sounded for orders, sir, and the messman desires me to say there will be no mess to-night, sir, as all the plate must be packed up."

"Very well—thank God!—I'll dine at the 'Navy and Army,' outside the barrack-gate; and here, Buff, ask Mr. Langley if he will dine with me."

The route arrived at a critical time, for visions were floating before me, of getting leave and keeping out of the way till it came—of exchanging, or doing something desperate; but now, in the bustle consequent to a hurried embarkation, and the graver or livelier thoughts it gave to our officers and men, according to their circumstances and prospects, my name would cease to be mentioned with Miss Palmer's; and knapsacks were packed, baggage corded, rooms dismantled, and Jew brokers settled with; the full uniforms were soldered up in tin cases to preserve them from the saline atmosphere during the long voyage before us; light Indian outfits were completed; the spare arms and accoutrements of every company were carefully oiled and packed up in the arm-chests; the mess-plate, &c., the regimental library—that useful appendage to every regiment, and first instituted in ours, more than a hundred years ago, by the Hero of Quebec—were all consigned to their several dark-blue and iron-bound chests, marked "Queen's Own;" and before the bugles had sounded at sunset the whole battalion was ready for its departure to those distant and burning shores from whence few, very few, of the fine sturdy Englishmen in its ranks might ever return, and then only with blighted hopes and broken constitutions. I gave Buff two dozen of cards with "P. P. C. for Aden," pencilled in the corners, and telling him where to leave them, dismissed from my memory all my flirtations and new-made friends, for I had other matters to remember now. I felt soothed by the bustle around me, and though I went to bed at an hotel, with the conviction that many a long year might elapse before again I slept on British ground, I reposed more soundly than I had done for any night during the past week.

The heavy rumbling of three of those enormous four-wheeled wagons which are peculiar to England, and seem so strange and unwieldy to Scottish eyes—the clatter of horses' feet, and the voices of soldiers singing merrily as they passed through the street, first aroused me, and I remembered that Montague, with the baggage-guard, was to depart an hour before daylight; and soon after Buff appeared (in heavy marching order, with his canteen and rolled great-coat strapped to his knapsack) to dress me; and I hastened to the parade-ground, where the men were gathering rapidly.

The western sky was grey, but the east was reddened by the rising sun; the Medway rolled in light between its fertile shores, and the shadows of the long irregular town, that straggled along its margin, and nestled under the Norman castle of England's conqueror, were all reflected downward in its crystal depths, like those of the

vast and silent hulks anchored in the mid-channel. The monotonous barrack-buildings were dull and silent, too; for as yet, six thousand men were there a-bed; and the sentinels remained motionless in their boxes, all muffled in their grey great-coats.

Colonel O'Hara came forth on foot, as, like the rest of us, he had disposed of his horses, which could not be conveyed under the line and round the Cape; the regiment fell in by companies; the roll was called, and many were compelled to leave their weeping wives and the children who clung to their legs, and assume their place in the ranks. We were leaving upwards of eighty women (with one hundred and fifty children) who had drawn *blanks* in that painful ballot which Bently, our adjutant, had conducted on the preceding day; and as an order had been issued prohibiting them from following us to Gravesend, the whole of them formed a miserable and lamenting group, who stood shivering and weeping in the front street of the barracks, where the regiment was now wheeled into line, and then formed again into open column. There was many a moist eye in our ranks, but I saw none so much moved as Edmonds, the senior sergeant of my own company, whose young wife had already two pretty children, and would very shortly present him with a third.

"Is your wife here, Edmonds?" said I to him, kindly.

"No, sir, she has gone to Gravesend; but my two children are here, sir, with her sister, and I may never see them again in this world, for I am a hale man, and will not be invalided for fifteen full years to come, and that is a long time to look forward to in the hour of parting. My poor Mary will never get over this total separation, I fear."

I said all that occurred to me at the time to reassure and comfort him; but it was the poorest of all consolation to tell what I heard O'Flannigan say to him—that "there were fifty good men in as bad a case as himself; and to keep up his heart, for if he turned Arab at Aden he might have a score of wives to make up for the lass he left behind him."

Edmonds, who was a grave and sincere kind of man, was stung by this jest; and though our grenadier captain was a devil-may-care kind of fellow, he at once perceived it.

"Come, come," said he, apologetically, as he clapped the poor sergeant on the back, "be a man; we never know what is before us. I beg pardon for hurting your feelings. Give Mary this five-pound note, to help her in her trouble, and get new caps for her baby when it is born; and the whole of my grenadier company shall drink to its health, and hers too, though the deep salt sea may roll between us—bad luck to it!"

Here the bugle sounded for the officers to fall in; we drew our swords, and joined our companies.

Knowing the bad effect of keeping the men in the sight of so many lamenting women, O'Hara marched the whole off, without

longer delay. The first stroke of the bass drum, as the band began to play, reverberated on every ear like the report of a cannon; and that air so invariably played by the bands of regiments departing for foreign service, found a sad echo in the hearts of the poor weeping wives who followed us to the barrack-gate. The main-guard presented arms as we marched past with bayonets fixed and colours cased, a thousand strong, all in heavy marching order, with our pioneers in front, having their leather aprons, axes, saws, hammers, and bill-hooks, and O'Flannigan with his grenadiers, who were all tall men as the three kingdoms could produce. The magnificent band of the Buffs, and ten drums of resounding brass, made the deep ditches, the hollow casemates, the long arches of the fortifications, and the silent streets, re-echo to the crash of their music. The spirits of the men rose, and the tears and sadness of the few soon became lost in the merriment and reckless fun of the many. The cheering, the waving of caps, and brandishing of muskets were incessant, as we marched through Chatham and Rochester, giving jocular farewells to the night-capped citizens and the fairer portion of their families, who had sprung to their opened windows, and waved their handkerchiefs to the departing troops; for well do these residents know, when they see the shakos without their pompons, the great-coats rolled, and the havresacks on, and when, in the early morning, they hear that old Scottish, and now familiar British, air, "The girl I leave behind me," that a band of brave fellows are bound for the distant East.

I know of few scenes more exciting than the departure of a regiment for foreign service; and the sympathy is increased by the tone of the martial music. I remember having heard old Colonel Marchmont relate, how he had once seen a young lady throw herself over the windows of one of the loftiest houses in the then fashionable Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, when a Lowland regiment, an officer of which was her lover, marched through the street about daybreak. The marching *out*, with all its accessories, had thus worked upon her despair, and she fell dead at her lover's feet.*

It was a glorious summer morning as ever shone on fertile England's level scenery, and our hearts grew light as we marched through the long High-street of ancient Rochester, under the shadow of its lofty donjon, and crossed the river by that bridge which was esteemed the oldest, if not the finest, in South Britain. Here the band of the Buffs, which had played us thus far, and several officers belonging to various corps, who had also escorted us, bade us adieu, and we separated with three hearty cheers; and, continuing our route through Stroud, passed the well-known gate of Palmer's hospitable villa, and took the dusty road which leads direct to Gravesend.

* This anecdote is a fact.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMBARKATION—GRAVESEND.

WE entered Gravesend about nine o'clock, and marched through its narrow and irregular streets of red brick, down to the handsome iron jetty, which, even at that early hour of the day, was crowded by a multitude of richly-dressed Londoners, principally ladies, who frequent this busy watering-place, which has every accommodation for the idler and the *ennuyé*, in the way of hot baths, libraries, public gardens, and concert-rooms, &c.; and these idlers were now all crowding to the river side to witness the embarkation of the troops.

The Thames, filled with vessels at anchor, and others tacking or steaming in every direction; the lofty rigging of the *Candahar*; the low flat shore of Essex, with its sand-banks, slime, and sea-grass, looking so Dutch-like; and ancient Tilbury, with its earthen bastions, were all steeped in the warm glow of the morning sun.

Montague, with the whole of the baggage, had already embarked, and now our men went off to the transport by subdivisions of companies, in large boats, wherein they sat, closely packed on each others' knees, with their muskets between their legs; and as each boat slowly wended away, its living freight exchanged a lively cheer with the crowds on the wharves and jetty. The scene was highly exciting, and everything English, from the signboards to the blue eyes of the fair ones who waved their handkerchiefs and parasols, was interesting to us, for we knew that many a long year would elapse before we would see them—if ever—again.

And I thought of the land that lay beyond, which was dearer to me than all the world beside; and with that came the sad reflection that now few or none were there who loved or remembered me; and that I had now no home but where the colours of "the Queen's Own" chanced to be. And where was Cecil, then? I looked at the turgid river, which had borne her vessel down its tide but yesterday, and gathered a little satisfaction from the certainty that we would soon be following in its wake. But I endeavoured to stifle all these thoughts as I sheathed my sword, waved my cap, as a last adieu, to the ladies, and, with my detachment of the corps, was pulled by sixteen oars on board the *Candahar*. We were the last who left the shore of England.

"Welcome on board, Hilton," said O'Flannigan, when I appeared on deck. "Glorious, is it not, to think of all the balls, pic-nics, and supper-parties, the squeezes and flirtations, we have come through, and not had one of 'the Queen's Own' hooked, after all?"

The *Candahar* was a magnificent vessel, which had been built for the Honourable East India Company before the charter of that body expired, consequently she was a very old craft. She measured

eighteen hundred tons, and still carried her twenty-four 18-pounders and eight 32's, with a well-chosen crew of one hundred and fifty men. Any transport, but especially an Indiaman, making her final arrangements for her distant voyage, presents, of all the outward-bound, the most unexampled scene of confusion; and the arrangements consequent to quartering and stowing away a regiment of one thousand men, greatly increased the bustle. Baggage, stores, provisions, casks, knapsacks, muskets, and accoutrements, coils of rope, soldiers, women and children, baskets of eggs, vegetables, and fowls, pigs, ducks, geese, and turkeys, a couple of cows, piles of hay, grass, and straw, encumbered all the main and lower decks; and one might have deemed it Noah's Ark getting under weigh, but for the shouting, swearing, hoisting up of one thing and lowering down of another, and all the bustle and uproar which, for some hours were unparalleled, while the heavy topsails hung loose in the breeze that swelled out Blue Peter at the foremast-head; and the ship strained upon her cable, as if impatient of her lagging captain, who was coming from London by the next steamer.

For many it is fortunate that this bustle and excitement occur, for by its stunning effect it is admirably calculated to suppress the natural emotions of sorrow with which we bid adieu for so long a period to the shores of our native country. Yet, amid it all, there occurred many a painful scene; for some of our soldiers' wives, who had followed us in vans from Chatham, were now being pulled round and round the vessel in the shore-boats, exchanging sorrowful and heart-rending farewells with their husbands, who crowded the lower deck ports, where they saw their little ones held up at arms' length, and knew too well that probably never again their kiss would touch its dimpled cheek; and there, all unaware of the coming separation, the poor children crowed, and clapped their little hands, till many a brave fellow's breast was swollen almost to bursting beneath his coarse red coat. These are sorrows and emotions to which the "gentlemen of England who live at home in ease" are often strangers; and many who suppose the soldier to be a light-hearted fellow, whom neither care nor trouble can touch, might have learned a lesson to the contrary on that day at Gravesend.

What a vivid change was all this bustle to the monotony with which, when in garrison, and off duty, we lounged through the hours of a long sunny day.

Edmonds, the sergeant of my company, who was compelled to leave his young wife in England, and who expected to have bade her adieu on the beach, could nowhere see her before embarking; nor could he discover her in any of the shore-boats which were incessantly paddling round the vessel; and the poor man was in a state bordering on distraction, for the unfortunate young woman was very near the time of her confinement, and he feared that in the excitement of a day so terrible to them both, she might have been taken seriously ill. I pitied Edmonds sincerely: the more so as, at

that bitter time, he had many arduous duties to fulfil, in getting the soldiers of our company "told off" to their various berths, &c.

We were destined to form the garrison of our new settlement on the coast of Arabia, Aden, on the Red Sea, where a battalion of the Rifles was quartered, and there sorely pressed by the daily and nightly attacks of a ferocious Arab chief, Mohammed-al-Raschid, the Emir of the Abdali, or Abdallahs, and other wanderers in the kingdom of Yemen. Of the climate, the country, and their perils from wild animals and wilder Arabs, cholera and ague, heat, and scarcity of provisions, we received a most lamentable and discouraging account from a lively little commissary, who had been there when we first took possession of the place, in 1839, and he assured us that he was constantly in danger of starvation.

"God help the poor soldiers when the commissary finds *himself* starving!" said O'Flannigan, as we descended to the cabin where De Lancy was studying the last numbers of *Bell's Life* and the *Sporting Magazine* which he would see for many a day; where Langley and others were writing farewell letters to mothers, sisters, sweethearts, and guardians, to despatch ashore with the pilot off Deal; and where the sentimental Popkins, whose ideas of the Arabs were chiefly drawn from the Moors in Bulwer's "Leila," and who believed that Aden might prove another Granada, and Mohammed the Abdallah, a Boabdil-el-Chico, was struggling hard to master the "Araby Maid" on his everlasting flute.

With sunset came a comparative calm, for the daylight and the bustle died together; and long before the drums in old Tilbury had beaten tattoo, our men had all been supplied with their white duck frocks, and had their berths allotted to them, their accoutrements hung over each on cicats or slings, and their arms placed on racks. The whole regiment was divided into watches, one of which was to be constantly on deck, with at least one subaltern officer. We had a merry night in the mess-cabin, and after smoking our cigars on deck, and watching the passing ships, and the lights of Gravesend, twinkling as they were reflected in the rippling water, I turned in, and though this night was my first on board, owing to the toil and stupefying bustle of the day that had passed, I slept more soundly than I had done for many a night before; so soundly, indeed, that I did not hear the gun fired from the bows at daybreak, as a signal to get the ship under weigh, and for all persons belonging to the shore to leave her without delay.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STOWAWAY—THE STORM.

EARLY next morning the grating and jarring sounds, the creaking and straining of the ship's timbers, the swinging of my cabin lamp,

and the doleful sounds that were issuing from the adjacent berths, warned me that we were fairly under weigh.

"What noise is that?" I asked Buff, who was transferring my wardrobe from the trunks to my chest of drawers.

"Mr. Popkins, sir; he is very unwell this morning."

"With sea-sickness, I suppose?"

"He says it is a nausea caused by the nuts he took with his claret last night," said O'Flannigan, looking in. "Buff, give him my compliments, and beg him to favour us with that beautiful air he played on the flute all yesterday."

Buff stood for a moment irresolute whether or not to obey the desire of the captain, and then wisely continued his unpacking, as O'Flannigan went on deck.

"Come, Hilton, turn out," said Montague, who passed next; "it is a fine breezy morning, though with a lazy sky and a grey sea; we are just passing the guard-ship at the Nore."

Having to relate stranger adventures than those which generally befel an officer travelling from Chatham to the East, I will not inflict upon my readers a few leaves from a ship's log; suffice it to say, that with a fresh easterly wind, the Candahar, with her cargo of "the Queen's Own," passed through the Downs, along the sandy shores of Kent, and on the afternoon of the 20th of June, we took our last look of the Start and the white cliffs of old England. A few disputes with three Company's-service men about berths and seats at table soon passed over, and all was harmony afterwards.

Till the 27th of June, the weather was frequently so rough, that we were six times obliged to carry double reefed topsails and over-reefed courses, but after this the weather became more pleasant, and the heat was increasing every day.

On the 30th, we saw the Pico Ruivo, and other tall isolated cones of Madeira; but bore on, and on the third day of July caught the north-east trade-wind, and this carried us across the line on the 14th, when Father Neptune paid us his usual visit from the fore-castle, and the whole ceremony of shaving was gone through in all its glory and absurdity, my poor servant, Buff, being, on this occasion, one of the patients. We had now been twenty-seven days out, when an event occurred which cast a gloom over all on board; for if the most trivial occurrence when it happens at sea acquires an air of importance, that which I am about to relate became doubly so from several causes.

The follies consequent to the visit of Neptune had subsided; we were going under easy sail; the weather was of course extremely hot, the pitch boiling out of the decks and blistering the ship's side; we had all donned our white Indian jackets, and the soldiers wore their duck frocks without coats below them. Langley and Montague were loading their rifles to have a shot at three sharks which had been following our vessel indefatigably for many days, as we could easily perceive by their black crooked fins which stood above the

glistening water; and O'Flannigan frequently told poor Popkins, who had not quite recovered his sea-sickness, that they were only waiting and following in the expectation of having him for a luncheon. I was lying under an awning between two of the leeward guns, studying hard at Arabic, or rather, improving upon the little I had picked up from our parish dominie at home, when Buff approached me with some trepidation in his face, and said that "a dead body had been found in the lower hold!"

On receiving this startling information I hurried to the lower deck, and there found several soldiers and sailors, with the light of lanterns, hoisting up something which was enveloped in canvas, while all their faces were expressive of a repugnance and alarm, for which the awful odour that immediately saluted my nostrils was a sufficient explanation. Our three surgeons hurried to the scene with chloride of lime, &c., and the body, which had been found (jammed between two of our company's arm-chests) by two seamen who had gone down for stores, was brought up to the awning on the maindeck, where the whole crew and regiment crowded around, lining the poop and manning the mizen shrouds in their anxiety to see it.

The *stowaway* was found to have been a woman, too evidently the wife or sweetheart of one of our soldiers, who had secreted herself on board when we were off Gravesend, that she might accompany him; but bale after bale, with all the most useless part of the regimental baggage had been piled around and bridged over her; then the hatch had been secured, and thus, amid the tonnage of the deep ship, the wild cries of the wretched creature had been unheard.

Whether she had been suffocated at once, or had lingered on for days, and died by the slow and terrible progress of starvation, thirst, and despair; whether she had been stifled on the first night of her voluntary imprisonment, or whether, by the lurching of the ship, she had afterwards been crushed between the ponderous chests of spare muskets, it was now impossible to say, for there was no end to surmise or to horrible conjecture; for the poor remains were so much decomposed, that little or no trace of the original features remained.

Something wrapped in the clothing of the deceased now attracted the attention of Dr. Splint, our senior surgeon, who had been examining the body with that immovable nonchalance which is only to be acquired in the atmosphere of hospitals and dissecting-rooms; and as he unrolled it, a cry of commiseration rang through the whole ship, when it was found to be a little child which appeared to have been born into the world in that horrible place, and without seeing the light, to have perished with its hapless mother.

The bodies had not been above three minutes on deck, when Sergeant Edmonds, who had been in the back part of the crowd, impelled by some terrible presentiment, forced his way through, and

on obtaining one glance of the remains, uttered a groan, and went down on his knees beside them.

"Mary! Mary! oh, Mary!" was all he could utter, as he covered his face with his hands; for although the sunken eyes, relaxed jaws, and fallen nose of the dead rendered her no longer recognisable, but awful to look upon, yet, by her dress and figure, the sergeant knew at once his wife, the young wife whom he thought was far away in England with her other two little ones, and for whom he had looked in vain on the busy beach and among the crowded boats at Gravesend.

To end this painful scene as soon as possible, O'Hara, our colonel, who was a kindhearted Irishman, and like all his countrymen a fine soldier, led Edmonds away, and desired that the funeral should take place as soon as possible. The bodies were hastily rolled up in canvas and a thirty-two pound shot attached to them.

The drum was beaten, and the boatswain's pipe summoned all on board to the interment. Montague read the Burial Service according to the ritual of the English Church, and I have seldom witnessed a finer or a more impressive scene than was presented; that great ship on the wide open sea, with her flag half hoisted, and upwards of 1200 soldiers and seamen standing bareheaded round the corpse upon the grating. The splash soon announced that we had committed it *to the deep*, and all crowded to look over at the ring of foam in which it had vanished for ever; all save the poor sergeant, who covered his eyes and his ears to shut out the mournful sound.

"Pipe down!" cried the captain. Again the shrill whistle rang through the ship, and all was over. Thus, with all the solemnity of an ocean funeral, we launched both child and parent into their watery grave in little more than half-an-hour after their discovery. The unhappy sergeant was excused from duty; but he seemed like a man about to lose his senses; that events so terrible should have passed within so brief a space seemed incredible: and his comrade was desired to keep a strict watch over him, for by the peculiarity of his manner, we feared he might commit suicide by shooting himself or going overboard in the night. He met with sincere sympathy, and from none so much as those poor fellows who had left at home those wives and little ones they might never see again.

After the funeral the sharks *disappeared*. An old sailor told me gravely, that "they had all along been aware we had a dead body on board, and now they had gone after it;" be this as it may, we could no longer see their black fins by day, or their glittering scales by night, following steadily in the white foamy wake of the stately Candahar.

"Talking of sharks," said O'Flannigan, "I will tell you a story about one, which is worth making a note of. You know that I was once, for my sins, a lieutenant in the 2nd West India Regiment,

where I grew sick of sangaree, Manilla cheroots, and yellow girls, and marsh fever, the ague, and the Lord knows all what more, till I was on the point of being settled for ever where the headstones are stored thick as the hairs on your head, by Uphill Park, in the island of Jamaica. Well—to recruit my health, I got a few months' leave, and went with a friend of mine, Lieutenant Bagot, who commanded her Majesty's schooner Pickle, on the look-out for Spanish slavers, and a pleasant cruise we had off the Isle of Pines. One fine evening we were lying in sight of Cape Francisco, and the sun was tinging with gold its yellow sands, and the long green groves of palm, date, orange, and lemon trees, when word was passed from the watch, that a large schooner was steering inside the Keys of San Julian.

"'Pipe the Pickles to quarters,' said Bagot, 'and make all sail in chase.'

"There was a fine breeze; every stitch of canvas was crowded on her Majesty's schooner, and we very soon convinced the other craft that she had not the shadow of a chance of escape. We soon overhauled her, though she bore right away before the wind, and chose dangerous channels among the sandy Keys, for her draught of water was light. Heavy odds were taken that she was a slaver, for she was taut rigged, with a heavy foremast and bowsprit, and a long mainmast, that tapered away aloft like a fishing-rod. She carried the Spanish flag, but had no pennant, though her sides were full of men, her ports were open, and we could make out two large guns. With all our men at quarters, and our cannon loaded with round and cartridge shot, we crossed her stern, and hailed her to lie to, which she immediately did, seeing the futility of further flight. Bagot and I went on board to examine her, in a boat crowded with seamen and marines, armed to the teeth; the skipper, a strong muscular and swarthy Spaniard, with his face all whiskers, and gold rings in his ears, wearing a brown jacket braided, a broad hat and cotton drawers, received us very sullenly, and submitted his papers, log, and charts for examination on the capstanhead. She proved to be the Cadiz schooner, La Senora Carlotta, bound from Santa Martha for the Havannah, with a crew of fifty men, and carrying two twenty-four pounders. On deck were a vast number of ringbolts and water-casks, which, together with her peculiar odour, made us strongly suspect she was a slaver, but we could find nothing on board to warrant her detention, so after a horn of the real Old Tom, we separated, when the Spaniards filled their head sails, and with shouts of derisive laughter bore away.

"'May I never see dry land again,' said Bagot, 'if these rascals have not just landed their cargo, and cheated us of a splendid prize.'

"That night, about two bells in the middle watch, a fishing line which I had left trolling overboard, contrary to orders, was observed to be jumping about in a very remarkable way. A quartermaster

and I hauled it in, hand over hand, and lo ! there was a jack-shark, about five feet long, grinning like Satan, and dashing his tail about till the stroke of a hatchet settled his spinal marrow for ever. Our black cook cut him up, and what do you think we found in his rapacious maw ? the whole of the private signals of La Senora Carlotta, and all her papers, which had been flung over to starboard at the very moment we boarded her to larboard, and which on examination proved that just four hours before we desecrated her, she had landed two hundred and ninety-three slaves ;* and very much disappointed we were at the manner in which we had let her slip through our fingers."

After touching at St. Helena, amid boisterous weather, we rounded the stormy Cape of Good Hope, and without being favoured by even a glimpse of the famous Table Mountain, or being overhauled by the still more famous Flying Dutchman, on having attained the necessary parallel of longitude, we began to haul up for the Indian Ocean, and to our great satisfaction fell in with the south-west monsoon, which generally lasts from the middle of April to the middle of October, throughout the whole extent of that mighty sea, which rolls between the shores of Africa, Arabia, and Japan ; and after altering our course, for some days we were surrounded by a greater number of gigantic albatrosses than I remember to have ever seen collected together.

Notwithstanding that every means were resorted to for the laudable purpose of killing time, and lightening the tedium of our voyage, to a landsman it was excessively monotonous, and the longer we were at sea, the less we liked it. We grew weary of sky and wave, and thought our voyage would never have an end. I watched our progress on the chart from point to point, and hailed with pleasure each successive object in the Mosambique channel, where we passed a number of homeward-bound American whalers, and then we came in view of those strong fortifications which our allies, the French, are erecting on the Island of Mayota, a territory obtained by them in 1843. I recollected with something of surprise, that there was a time when I had never tired of gazing at the ocean, but this was when its crested waves were rolling on the *shore* ; and the length of the voyage was the more provoking when we considered the narrow Isthmus of Suez, which barred the shorter passage by the Red Sea.

All the transport regulations were strictly adhered to. We had a daily parade when the weather was fine, and in accordance with the general orders, all the soldiers appeared barefooted ; every day the whole of the bedding was brought on deck ; all the soldiers' lights were extinguished at eight o'clock, when the bugle sounded, and the officers' at ten at night. Once a week we paraded in complete marching order, and this was a pleasure, for it smacked of the land ;

* Montreal Gazette, May, 1834.

on Sunday we had divine service, when Montague, who had been educated for the Church of England, always acted as our chaplain, and a most efficient one he made. The men were all in excellent health during the voyage, four excepted, who had fever and flux, occasioned by sleeping on the deck, in that hot, breathless, and burning atmosphere, the fiery nature of which seemed to be increasing with every day's progress. Our band played on the calm evenings; most of us took to completing ourselves in the sword exercise; we were all at it every day, often in a general *mêlée* for an hour at a time, until we became perfect in the use of our weapons; and this perfection was afterwards of great service to us, in our more serious encounters with the treacherous Arabs of Aden; I finished successfully my study of the Arabic, and Popkins achieved one complete air on the flute!

After a delightful run along the western coast of Africa, the monsoon accompanying us the whole way, on the morning of the 27th September, we found ourselves rounding Ras-Assere, that bold promontory which forms the most eastern point of the mighty African continent, and the end of that long chain of beautiful mountains which lie along the coast of Ajan.

For two days we carried on with a fine nine-knot breeze upon our quarter, but on the 29th it increased towards evening; the atmosphere became dense, the breeze increased to a gale, and we took in the mainsail: then the rain fell in such torrents as can only fall out of tropical skies, where every drop is the size of a musket ball, and this ceaseless shower plashed and hissed as it sowed that black and tumbling sea. The wind came in sudden and furious gusts, and the old Candahar laboured heavily; we lowered the main-topsail, furlled the fore and mizen-topsails, clewed up the foresail, doubled the watch on deck, and scudded on in the darkness and obscurity of that troubled ocean, till the increasing gale compelled us to have everything furled fore and aft, and the ship was laid almost under bare poles.

I shall never forget the fury of this storm, as it appeared at one period of the night, when I stood by the weather rigging of the mizenmast, and saw the stupendous mountains of ink that rolled towards us, black, heaving, crested and terrible, with the pale green lightning bursting behind them and revealing the sharp outline of their ridges, as it shot through the cloudy sky; then the thunder followed peal on peal, as if its very *sound* would have ploughed the ocean up; and then came another deluge of blinding rain, while the wind blew in one unceasing and unvarying tempest. The dead-lights were shipped, and the hatches battened down till our people below were almost suffocated; the pumps were kept at work, and the strong ship rose and fell like a cork on the stormy sea, one moment pitching with bows under water, and the next, rolling ^{and} her channels were buried and her yard-arms dipping in the foam.

Bolt after bolt of lightening shot athwart the sky—bright, oroad, and blinding—from the poop we could see the faces of those who were in the waist—the drenched rigging, and the masts and yards all dripping with rain and bitter spray; the atmosphere continued as dense as ever; and the horror or interest of this midnight tempest was increased by De Lancy (who being a yachtsman was about the best seaman in the regiment) affirming, that by one of those brilliant flashes, he had seen *a large ship go down to leeward of us!*

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PIECE OF WRECK-WOOD.

WITH morning the gale subsided, but the yellow and discoloured ocean was flecked with the foam of its last night's turmoil; the atmosphere continued dense and stifling, and the bright lightning yet flashed at times, but afar off. Now we were able to unclothe the hatches, after which the people between decks were able to respire freely, and were freed from the chance of being stifled. The storm of the night had changed the aspect of the Candahar; her paint was nearly all washed off; huge splinters had been torn from her, and the wood was covered with the red rust of eyebolts and other ironwork. A spar or two had been carried away, but I forget which they were.

From Cape Guardafui to Aden we had yet before us a run of three hundred miles, in that sea of strong and rapid currents that roll along the shores of the land of myrrh and incense; but after the vast distance we had traversed, three hundred miles seemed as nothing, and we expected in another day to see our long wished for destination rising from the deep.

The second day after the storm was clear, bright, and beautiful; there was not a trace of cloud in the pure blue sky; not a trace of foam on the blue Arabian sea, which shone around us hot, waveless, and still as an ocean of molten crystal. Its surface seemed to vibrate in the rays of the sun, though the season was that which in Britain is most temperate; and under the burning glare we thought of the cool autumn days, the shady trees, and stubble-fields at home, when the grain is gathered on the breezy uplands, and the bordering coppice becomes tinged with russet brown.

We were gliding along under easy sail, and the eyes of all loungers on deck were fixed on Abdul-Kuria, a high and rugged isle of granite, which was visible about ten miles distant on our starboard bow, when our attention was arrested by a sailor who was at work in the mizen-crosstrees hailing the officer of the watch, and reporting that he saw a piece of wood, part of a ship apparently, floating about a mile off. This announcement excited the curiosity and interest of all on board; and as Popkins kept a journal, and was most anxious

for some occurrence to insert in it, he proposed that we should ascertain what it was; and as it was almost a calm, O'Hara consented; a boat was lowered, and Langley, Montague, De Lancy, Popkins, several other officers, with one of the ship's mates and myself, pulled in great glee straight towards the island; for the piece of drift-wood lay in a line between it and the ship.

Drifting fast on the current that runs round Ras-Assere, we had a longer pull after it than had been calculated on; and as the wind was springing up, a gun was fired from the ship as a signal for us to return; but we paid no attention, and pulled vigorously on for ten minutes more, until we reached the object of our expedition, around which a cloud of Mother Cary's chickens were hovering.

It proved to be the carved figurehead of a large vessel, to which one of the headrails was attached, and both were considerably chafed and worn by the action of the water.

"This must be the headrail of a ship of not less than eight hundred tons," said the officer of the Candahar, who held the tiller-ropes, and stood up as we approached the fragment.

"I told you all that I saw a large ship go down on the night of the storm," said De Lancy, looking at the drifting wood with that kind of expression in his face, as if he would implore it to tell its own story.

"Let us turn it over and see the name," said the mate; "put your hands to it, gentlemen—heave, and together."

At that moment bang went another cannon from the ship; it sounded like a popgun, for she was nearly two miles off by this time, and the report reached us long after the smoke had cleared away.

"Another shot from the Candahar," said Langley; "what a deuced hurry O'Hara is in."

With no small trouble we turned the mass of framed-work over in the water; and as it fell heavily with a splash on the other side, the terrible words,

"FARNHAM CASTLE"

appeared in large capital letters before me!

"The Farnham Castle?" cried every one in the boat.

"She was bound for Bengal, and sailed a day or so before us," said the mate; "but what would she be about between the African coast and the Isles of Socotora?"

"But headrails are often unshipped by a sea," said Montague.

"And quite as often are torn off when a foundering ship goes plunging down, head foremost, in the sea," said the mate, as the oars were shipped for our return; "and this seems like a sad corroboration of what Mr. De Lancy told us on the night of the storm. Give way now, gentlemen, if you please; stretch out!"

"A large ship," said De Lancy. "Quite certain, she went down between us and the flashing lightning."

"On—on for the ship, for the wind freshens fast," said Langley. "Frank, my dear fellow, you look weary; give me your oar."

Fred had given me a glance full of commiseration when the name was discovered; for he knew the ship in which Cecil had sailed, and the terrible field for dark and sorrowful conjectures this piece of floating wreck would open up before me.

I shall not attempt to paint the agonies of sorrow, anxiety, and reproach I endured—sorrow that Cecil should have departed on that distant and disastrous voyage unfriended and alone, and that perhaps she had died, believing me untrue; anxiety, stinging and bitter, to discover the actual fate of her ship (and I knew that months must elapse before I could do so); reproach, for the apparent unkindness of which I had been guilty in my thoughtless flirtation with Blanche Palmer, and but for which my dear Cecil might have been my wedded wife, and safe on board the Candahar, and sailing with us all on that beautiful Arabian sea, whose waters were now perhaps rolling over her!

Langley, who was among the best of good-hearted fellows, cited a hundred real or imaginary instances in which pieces of wreck had been found, and been considered quite conclusive as to the loss of ships, which, months after, came sailing merrily into port; and he left nothing unsaid to convince me that the first Indian steamer, with the overland mail (after our arrival), would bring us good tidings of the Farnham Castle; but though his friendship soothed, it could not allay the dire apprehensions which filled my breast during the remainder of this tedious voyage, which (thank Heaven) came to a close on the 3rd day of October.

On the evening of that day, after several shore birds had perched on our rigging, and long dark tangles of strange-looking seaweed had been swept past us, a joyful cry from the mast-head announced that the coast of Aden was in sight, and three hearty cheers responded from the crowded decks below. There was an immediate rush to the starboard side and bow; but hours elapsed before the faint blue wavy line, which rose slowly from the azure sea, and darkened as the night descended, assumed the aspect of *terra firma*, and before we could assure ourselves that the scorched shores of Arabia were indeed before us, after a voyage of nearly four months from the time of our leaving Gravesend; and never were sounds more welcome to human ears than the clank of the chain cables, as they were bent to the ponderous anchor and the noise which accompanied the unstowing of the latter. Already we began to pack our trunks, while the soldiers strapped their knapsacks, and with delight made all their little preparations for disembarkation.

Langley, Montague, and I—for we were three "chums"—walked long on the deck that night, watching the rising coast—the Cape of Aden, which is discernible at the distance of twenty leagues—and through the open hatches we heard the buzz of happy tongues, and an occasional scrap of a song, as our soldiers, instead of sleeping,

were all awake in their births and hammocks, and waiting with impatience for the coming day.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADEN.

I WAS on deck next morning before sunrise; we were then almost alongside the Steamer Point, and nothing that I have seen since impressed me so much as the appearance of Aden.

The harbour is picturesque and beautiful, and across its glassy surface the morning sun threw the cool shadow of the dark Jebel Shamsán, which rises one thousand and seven hundred feet in height above the peninsula it crowns—a vast, black and fissured mass of rocks starting sheer from the waters of the gulf that roll in long and swelling ridges to its base. The whole of the promontory of Aden measures only six miles one way by three the other, and is situated three days' journey by camel, *i.e.*, a hundred miles, from the mouth of the Red Sea—a land journey rendered all but impracticable by the ferocity of the Subbeili Arabs, who possess all the country between, and like the wild Abdali, to whom Aden more immediately belongs, and the sultans of Sana and Lahadj, are the avowed enemies of the unbelieving Faringis, who have seized upon the cape for no better reason than that it is necessary as a *dépôt* for coaling our Red Sea steamers, and forwarding the overland mail from India. John Bull wanted it—and that is enough.

The peninsula is of volcanic origin, and its spires of calcined rock, which shoot up into a hundred fantastic cones and shattered pinnacles, are in some places twelve hundred feet high, presenting a sharp and jagged outline against the pure blue, cloudless sky, and showing how tremendous must have been the eruption and the throes of nature which filled them with those cells and endless galleries by which they are perforated, and which cleft its hills of basalt into abrupt and precipitous caverns. Through these mighty torrents of water have once poured into the gulf. By the same convulsion was formed that volcano through which came the mountain of lava and ashes that formed the isthmus; and the volume of fire which created the yellow porphyry and the white crystals that sparkle when the slanting sunbeam lights up its cyclopean walls. But the reader will find all this in the works of Welsted and others.

These shattered rocks in many places assume the aspect of castellated ruins and crumbling walls, and these I supposed to be the remains of that ancient splendour possessed by Aden, when it was the centre of trade with India, Africa, and Syria; or of those fortifications which daunted the adventurous Albuquerque; or of those wars, when it was surprised by the barbarous Osmanli, who hung its king from the mast of a ship—but, on after examination, those fancied

castles dwindled down to masses of crumbling lava, sprinkled with sand and ashes.

We had arrived during the cold or north-west monsoon, which there lasts from the beginning of October till March.

The sun was yet below the horizon when we assembled on deck; the unclouded sky was clear, cool, and dewy; the waves, which rolled round the bases of the volcanic rocks, were pellucid and transparent as the air itself. Near us lay the Isle of Serah, a rock five hundred feet in height, which is crowned by a line of ruined ramparts, from which, in the days of the Turks, forty pieces of enormous cannon swept the waters of the gulf: and we could see the subterranean foundations of this gigantic rock, and those of the surrounding shore, far down beneath the water-line, where a myriad snow-white shells were clustering, and where the bright green ocean plants were waving their long, slimy blades and fibres on beds of yellow sand and crimson coral, all of which we saw as through a green-glazed window.

With great alacrity, but with no pleasant anticipations of enjoying much gaiety or amusement, we disembarked on Steamer Point, where our soldiers rejoiced once more to find their knapsacks on their backs, and their feet on firm ground, and gave O'Hara a hearty hurrah as he came ashore. We formed in close column of companies, preparatory to marching off.

A crowd of wild-looking Arabs, wearing only turbans and cummerbunds, and leading donkeys, ponies, and even camels, offered them to us in broken English, at the hire of one rupee. Among the spectators were many officers and soldiers of the rifles, whom we had come half-way round the world to relieve; some of her Majesty's artillery, a few swarthy soldiers of a Bombay infantry regiment, and a multitude of Simallee fishermen, Peons, or Indian policemen, and lazy, wolf-like natives, half-naked, or clad in blue or brown tunics, and who viewed us with eyes of sullen scorn and distrust. Here and there appeared a Jewish artisan, anxious to sell the little wares in which he dealt, and exhibiting the greatest eagerness to make himself understood.

Among this heterogeneous crowd I observed one very handsome young Arab, who remained somewhat aloof, smoking his chibouque, and watching us with the greatest interest; indeed, I detected him counting our files with his finger. He wore a scarlet turban, the gold-fringed ends of which drooped upon his shoulders; he had long moustaches, and a straight sword, having a crimson-velvet sheath, covered with silver filigree ornaments of the most exquisite workmanship. In short, he seemed an Arab dandy of the first water.

Our soldiers were merry and loquacious as the parade was formed, for the satisfaction with which they found themselves again on mother-earth could not be restrained; but the late event of the Farnham Castle oppressed me with gloom, and the novel aspect of everything around me—the odd-looking buildings, the ill-made barges, the wonderful foliage and plants, the arid rocks, the uncouth people,

had all a strange and unpleasant character, and I turned from each feature in this new land to the next in quiet astonishment; but when I surveyed the squalid Arabs, the dirty Simalees, and long-bearded Jews, the scorched sand and sun-burnt rocks of naked basalt, or the wigwams that clustered near the shore, how difficult it was to believe that we were really in the fertile kingdom of Yemen, and treading on the sands of Araby the Blest—the cradle of Islam.

The regiment broke into sections; our noble band struck up the "British Grenadiers." Inspired by the music, all the Arabs began to caper and dance, as we marched from the landing place towards the intrenched camp, which is occupied by those troops who have the misfortune to be stationed in this remote corner of the *uncivilized* world.

The road is a tolerable one, and merrily rang the sharp brass drums and the notes of our splendid band, as we marched through a chasm (in the black and stupendous bluff which juts into the gulf), and from thence descended a steep path which skirts the margin of the open bay, where the waves rolled in white foam on the sandy shore, or dashed their silver spray and snowy shells against the mouths of those uncounted caverns that make the rock resemble a gigantic honey-comb. The romance of this beautiful scenery, which resembled the abode of a fairy in a pantomime, was somewhat taken away by O'Flannigan making the whole Grenadier company sing in chorus to the band; and the effect of a hundred voices echoed with countless reverberations in the unfathomed caverns, as we passed the mouth of each, was as sublime as the words of the song are ridiculous.

"Together, now, my lads, together!" cried O'Flannigan, clapping his hands; "together, you rapparees!"

"Some talk of Alexander, and *some* of Hercules;
Of Conan and Lysander, and one Miltiades;
But of all the world's great heroes, there's none that can compare,
Tow, row, row, row, row, row de dow,
With the British Grenadier!

"Thundering Jove applauds them, and Great Bellona smiles,
To see those warlike heroes, the flower of our British Isles:
And all the Gods Celestial, are bending from their spheres,
At the tow, row, row, row, row de dow,
Of the British Grenadiers!"

"Alas!" said Langley, with a tragi-comic air, "alas! for the girls we have left behind us!—the gas-lighted ball-room, the polka, the deux-temps; the flirtation at supper—blancmange and cold chicken—ices and champagne—the race-course and the promenade! for we are now in the land of our banishment."

"God knows *we* have had enough of it," said a bronzed officer of the Rifles, laughing; "your turn has now come for a few years. Heaven be thanked, that in a day or two, we turn our backs on Aden for ever."

"We ascended a steep path, and passed a gate in the fortifications

where a rifleman stood on sentry under a sunshade. On leaving this behind, we entered the crater of a defunct volcano, where, in an amphitheatre of burned rocks—as in a basin or hollow—among masses of old walls and ravines, or dried-up rivulets, stood the Aden of the present age, with its cement-coated houses, about a hundred in number, covered with ornamental wood-work and sentences from the Koran; its four brick minarets, each about sixty feet high, but ruined, and deserted, and tottering, for now the voice of the Muezzin summons the sons of Islam no more from their shattered galleries; its tombs and mounds of rubbish, its roofless mosque, its empty market-place, and deserted palace. Iron cannon peered through batteries of turf and stone; here stood the canvas tents of the British camp, bleached whiter than snow by the tropical sun; there, the traveller's bungalow, where Mirza Kufa, a Parsee, made a brave effort to produce occasional entertainment for man and horse. The dwellings of the natives were constructed of wooden uprights, having the intervals filled in with a species of gigantic field reed, which grows twenty-four feet high, and is to be found in perfection at Gholeib, near Suez; the roofs were matted over with date leaves and thatched with sedges; but a few good houses, built by the Europeans, stood conspicuous among these wigwams. Poor Popkins, whose mind was full of mosques with golden domes, seraglios with marble peristyles, gilded cupolas, kiosks of silver wire, with roses trained over them—brilliant carpets, sweet sherbet, turbans and cimitars, Arab maids, and all the glories of the “Thousand and One Nights,” was quite crest-fallen on beholding this desolate place; and I must own that many of us shared his disappointment. Not a blade of grass, not a shrub was to be seen; and one solitary mimosa tree, which spread its prickly foliage from a cleft of the lava, seemed even scorched and withered up, as if the breath of a furnace had passed over it. The few trees that had adorned this hollow of ashes, had long since been converted into firewood by the soldiers who preceded us.

The sun came above the horizon as we halted in the British cantonment; it shed a flood of yellow light upon the arid rocks, the roofs and walls, the tents and bungalows of Aden, while a glorious flush of golden radiance lit up the caverned shore and the rippling waves that rolled away towards the West, where, afar off, the Straits of Bab-el-mandib—the Gate of Tears—opened from the Indian Ocean into the waters of the Red Sea.

CHAPTER XX.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

THE officers of a regiment of Bombay Infantry, those of the Rifles, and a company of Artillery who had been stationed at Aden for some time, related to us many stirring stories of their daily and

nightly encounters with the Arabs, who had sworn, by every vow which can bind a Mussulman, we should never retain in peace the wretched rock we had taken from them.

The hotel of Mirza, the Parsee, was our daily rendezvous, for it contained a kind of reading-room, where we had the London and Bombay papers, about a month old, of course. The host, a cunning fellow, belonging to that tribe which is scattered over all our Indian possessions, and the members of which are always merchants or traders and *never* soldiers, generally greeted a new visitor in the blandest manner.

"How you do, sahib," said he, with a grin from ear to ear, the first day I visited him; "me hope you very well—glad to see you again—me remember you at Cuddalore."

"Never was there, sir," said I, briefly.

"How *you* do, sahib—hope you very well," he added to O'Flannigan; "me remember you at Tehran."

"At Tyrone? the blazes you do!"

"Oh, yes; and the moonfaced girl, and the purse of rupees—aha! sahib."

He remembered having seen us all—even Popkins—somewhere.

It would appear, as we were informed by Major Dreghorn, of the Artillery (a tall, powerful and red-whiskered countryman of mine from Midlothian), a daily frequenter of Mirza's bungalow, that the coast had become infested by pirates, who captured every vessel and often murdered their crews. This was particularly the case with the unfortunate sailors of the Sylph and of the Minerva, whose throats were deliberately cut at the capstan-head by the captors, who, incited by the Santon Noureddin, at every slash of their jambeas, exclaimed "God is great!" and so perished all who refused to embrace Islamism. This brought on the storming of the fortress of Ras-el-Khaimah by the British troops under Colonel Smith; then followed the attack on poor Captain Thompson's small party of 800 men, who garrisoned Kishm in 1821, when, after a most disastrous expedition, his troops were nearly all cut off—650 being slain by the wild Arab horsemen. The Sultan was no better than a common marauder until 1837, when the destruction of a valuable British ship bound for Madras brought us into immediate contact with the chiefs of the Abdali and other Arabian tribes. As a coaling station for the overland communication with Europe was necessary, the aged Mahassan Sultan of Aden and Lahadj was offered 8000 dollars annually for the old crater, which he accepted; but influenced by the Santon Noureddin, his sultanship changed his sublime mind, and acted with great cruelty and deceit, until 1839, when a force consisting of 300 men of the 1st Bombay European Regiment, 340 of the 24th ditto, her Majesty's ship Volage of 28 guns, the Cruiser of 16, and the Honourable Company's ships Coote and Mahi sailed into the Gulf of Aden one fine morning in January, and threw a shower of shot and shell into the mosque, palace, and market-place, stormed the old

Turkish wall, and at the point of the bayonet drove out the Arabs, who made a desperate resistance, especially the tribe of the Abdali, who killed eleven British soldiers, and of whom no less than 140 were shot among the rocks.

"Though many years have now elapsed since its capture," continued the major, as we sat sipping some claret in the Parsee's bungalow, "we have been at incessant war with these rascally Abdali, who are about ten thousand strong, and occupy six hundred square miles of country. They come when we least expect them—generally in the night—climbing these steep rocks like squirrels, swimming through the water like eels, with their pistols in their turbans, and their sharp sabres in their teeth; gliding on, by twos and threes, till they gather in a multitude; then their shrill *tecbir*, or war-cry, pierces the stillness of the night like the yell of a hyæna! Our sentinels are massacred, our picquets attacked, and a barbarous conflict ensues, where quarter is neither given nor asked by Briton or Arab; for the Abdali will not take life at our hands even after we have disarmed him, but will rush upon the bayonet to obtain the glorious paradise which has been promised by that cunning fellow Mahomet. And all these fine things are acted here for weeks together, without the good people at home ever hearing a word about them."

"And the sultans?" I asked.

"For Lahadj we care little; but as for he of Sana, he is a cunning and a barbarous tyrant to boot," continued the major, who had been stationed there for seven years, and found a great pleasure in seeing new white faces, and especially in having a countryman to converse with; for Scotchmen have so many topics of common interest when abroad. "He resides far off, at Sanaa, the capital of his kingdom of Yemen, the walls of which are constantly guarded by a thousand horse and four thousand foot; and he instigates the Abdali, the Futhalis, and the Subbeihis Arabs (for they are all divided into tribes like our Scottish clans) to wage a perpetual war with us—a war that is blackened by every atrocity which the cruel imagination of these orientals can suggest."

"I begin to hate these Abdali before I know them," said Langley.

"Hate! that is a gentle word for them. Why, sir, they cut off heads as you would slice the top of an egg; they hang men on iron hooks by the backbone, and leave them to be eaten by eagles and hyænas. He is the most savage of all savages, the Emir Mohamed!"

"What is an emir?" asked Popkins, who had listened to all this with open mouth and staring eyes.

"It's Arabic for a blood-thirsty villain, who rides half-naked on horseback, and slays men, as you would shrimps, by the score. He has a strong castle, called Jebel Ahmer, about forty miles from this. We would have demolished it long ago, but feared to be cut off. I have known them to crucify a poor commissary's clerk who fell into their hands. What think you of that?"

"That was done by certain Jews of Mocha, who owed him money," said a soft, deep voice, in a corner of the room, where we had not been aware that any one was sitting. So intently had we listened to the relations of the energetic major, that unnoticed by us, the handsome young Arab, whom I observed on the day of our landing, had spread a carpet on the floor, seated himself crosslegged, and was alternately sipping coffee from a crystal cup and taking a whiff from the amber mouthpiece of a hookah.

"Can you swear that Arabs did not do it?" asked Dreghorn, twisting his moustache and knitting his brows.

"I will not swear to please *you*," retorted the young Arab, quietly; "I have said they were Jews."

The tall major shrugged his broad shoulders, with that expression of contempt which, by a long residence in India, most of our officers, unfortunately and improperly, imbibe for all people of colour.

"Are you the merchant of Mocha who has for some days past been selling coffee among the bungalows, and buying powder in exchange?" asked Dreghorn, with stern hauteur.

"I am Yussef, the merchant of Mocha," replied the Arab, with an immovable aspect, though his eyes were shining like fire. "The nakib of the white cannoniers should not be angry because brave men fight against him. Arabia is the land which God gave of old to the Arab, and why should he not fight for it against the Faringis?"

"O, very well, master Yussef; but did not Victoria, the queen of the Faringis, offer yearly eight thousand dollars for this beautiful place—the crater of an old volcano—and your sultan of Lahadj would not sell it, though I was sent to tell him in the best of Arabic that she wanted it to coal her steamers, and must have it whether he would or not."

"Neither the sultans of Yemen or Lahadj could sell one foot of the land that was given to the sons of Ishmael, for it is theirs, and everything thereon, even to the white shells which the sea casts upon its shore, and the ripe dates that fall and wither in the desert. If the Faringis can keep it by the sword, then let them keep it; but if the Arab can retake it, let him do so. The Faringi is brave, but is the poor Arab less so? Let them not throw their dirt on each other's beards, and use epithets like angry women."

"When did these Abdali beat up your quarters last?" asked Fred Langley, to change the subject.

"About two months ago—they have been wonderfully quiet; but smooth water runs deep. Their old chief (who was a veritable ogre) took himself off to Paradise a short time ago, and his hopeful son and heir (one of the four nakibs who command the cavalry of Yemen) has now assumed his pipe and carpet, and is said to be brave as a lion."

"He has sworn by every oath in Islam, to drive the Faringis into the Gulf of Aden," said the young Arab, "and he will do so."

"Let him try it," said the major, drily; "I have just put some very pretty thirty-two pounders on their patent carriages this morning, and my fellows are busy day and night at Mount St. Thomas, making up service charges of powder; and you may tell him so, master Yusef."

"Mohamed of the Abdali is brave beyond all brave men!" said the Arab; "at least so say his tribe, who love him, and have named him *the Just*; and from Hejaz and Hadramaut—yea from the deserts of Oman, he will bring against you as many horsemen and spears as there are drops in a shower of rain."

The Arab smiled pleasantly, and as he sat near the open window of the bungalow, in the light of the setting sun, with his fine olive features—so handsome in their regularity, and so expressive, with his soft dark eyes—his aquiline nose and long silky moustache; his scarlet turban, with its golden fringes, hanging down his back; his vest of crimson velvet laced with gold, his spotless white breeches, rich sword and hookah, I thought he would have made an admirable subject for a sketch by Wilkie or Allan, the chiefs of our National Academy.

"Now, master Yusef, answer me this," said the haughty major, who seemed to be in a pugnacious and argumentative mood; "have not we Faringis done unto you Arabs a vast deal of good? When I was first quartered here, the population consisted of a thousand poor devils, who were almost mad, and who lived upon fish and dates. *Now* they are trebled in number, and we find them food, work, and raiment."

"Work!" reiterated the merchant, now for the first betraying a little warmth; "yea, in making fortifications against the faithful, and in return teaching them to lie and cheat; to wear hats instead of turbans; to live in houses of stone instead of tents like their fathers; to eat food forbidden by the Holy Koran; to curse the blessed Prophet; to break the feast of Ramadan, to drink wine, to become slaves, porters, and brayers of mortar, and to bring disgrace on the blood of Ishmael, whose home should be in the desert; but I have said enough. Had I the learning of Geber and of Abdallah Ibn Sin (Avicenna), I would fail to convince you that the Arab is happier without that civilization which you Faringis would thrust down our throats by the bayonet."

"Happier in the desert—as Ahl el Wabar (dwellers in tents)," said I, in Arabic, and his eyes kindled as he gave me a bright smile, for I spoke the language pretty purely.

"You might as well speak to him about table-turning, spirit-rapping, or the electric telegraph," said the major, "as speak to him about civilization—and I am wasting more wind than a bag-piper."

"You think us a strange people, because you understand us not," said the Arab, in his slow broken English. "We are proud of our country, which once conquered nearly all the Kafir world; we are

proud of our Sheikhs, for the oldest nobility of Frangistan are but the moths of yesterday when compared to the long descended sons of Ishmael. It is rash to mock and taunt us; and I tell thee, proud nakib," he added, addressing Dreghorn, "that the Emir Mohamed hath made a vow to hew thy head off with his own hands."

"Mine," said Dreghorn, lighting a cigar very quietly; "the devil he has? When I was in China, an old mandarin swore the same oath, yet we became very good friends after, and have often bobbed and nobbed over a bow-wow pie."

"The emir will keep his vow, by the grot of Mount Hara, he will!" resumed the Arab, with sparkling eyes; then turning to me, he added, "in the black tent or in the yellow desert, or on the green mountain only is the Arab at home, and true to the fate ordained him by the Most High (bowing his head). Listen, and you also, nakib," he continued, sternly addressing the major, "and I will tell you how the desert became the inheritance of the Arab."

Then he paused, as if he thought a holy legend would be thrown away on such an audience, but, after being pressed by me, he began as follows:—

"We are told in the traditions of the Santons, and in many sacred writings, that after Isaac was born unto Abraham in his old age, when Sarah saw his other son—the child of Hagar, the beautiful Egyptian slave—she mocked her bitterly, and urged the patriarch to cast forth the poor bondwoman, whom she had bestowed upon him, vowing that her child should never be equal to, or heir with, Isaac. And though the request was grievous in the sight of Abraham, yet he promised that she should be expelled from his tents and dwelling-place.

"This was at an early hour of the morning, when the sun was yet below the eastern hills, and the newly-gathered waters of the Dead Sea were rolling in darkness at the base of the desert mountains. Undeterred by the memory of that awful morning, when he saw the sun rising for the last time above the cities of the plain, and when he saw the smoke of the country arise like that of an enormous furnace, he approached the black tent where Hagar—whom Sarah had bestowed upon him—slept with his child in her bosom, and awaking her, he put a loaf of bread in her hand, hung a leathern bottle of water upon her shoulder, and told her to take up the child and go forth. And so she departed weeping, and in great grief.

"She wandered for many days through the land of Edom, passing within sight of Mount Hior, where Aaron died, and those bare mountains, under which our Santons say the river which watered the Garden of Paradise has hidden its current since the deluge; and further on—on—a mighty distance for one poor, weak woman to travel, through palm forests, over black rocks and burning sands, till she passed into Hejaz, the land of the pilgrimage, on the shores of the Red Sea, and there her miraculous bottle became exhausted; for the soil which belonged to the Jarhamites was without wells, and on

every side or ner was sand only, where no blade of green grass grew, and nothing lived or moved but the vultures that hovered over her in mid air.

"Above her head the sky was as blue as the ocean in winter; but to the west, where the flat desert stretched away towards the then nameless hills of that vast sea of sand which lies between the shores of Kolzom and the Persian Gulf, it was flushed with the red blaze of the sun that had set; and amid that blaze one lonely star was twinkling; but it brought no hope to the poor mother who was dying of want and of despair. A palm-tree stood between her and the evening sky; it was aged and withered, and the white dust of the scorching day that was gone, lay upon its long and pendant leaves, which were drooping and unwaven, for there was not even a breath of wind to fan her wasted cheek.

"And under that desolate tree, Hagar laid her little Ishmael down, and retiring from him about the distance of a bowshot, she covered her weeping face with her scanty raiment, and with her long black hair, saying,—

"'Let me not see the death of my child!'"

"Then she lifted up her voice as all the mother gushed forth in her heart, and she wept bitterly. But at that moment, one of the good geni had pity upon her, and touching her gently, said,—

"'Weep not, O Hagar, for here is a well of water, which at this moment hath risen from the sand.' And he told her, in such words as I dare not repeat to the unbelieving, that the descendants of her little Ishmael would become a mighty people; that he would become a wild man and a strong warrior, with his sword and spear against every man, and every man's sword and spear against him.

"So there Hagar dwelt in the desert of the Jorhamites, and Ishmael took to wife an Egyptian girl, and they had twelve sons, all valiant princes, whose descendants became numerous as the shells on the shore of the Red Sea; and there by the miraculous well, the blessed well of *Zem-zem*, so called from the soft murmur of its waters, he buried his mother when her time came, and there to this hour they show her grave, the grave of Hagar the poor bondwoman. Over that tomb and well Father Abraham was commanded to build a temple in memory of Ishmael's miraculous preservation by the good geni; and so he raised the house of the Holy Kaaba, consecrated to the Father of all the Faithful; and therein he placed the balance stone, which came from heaven white as new milk; but since then, the sins of men have rendered it blacker than the rocks of Mount Horeb.

"The twelve sons of Ishmael married the black eyed daughters of the Jorhamites, and in time became good Arabs; while there grew around the temple and the well, which still flows from its eastern side, a stately city which men called Mecca; and the land around it became fertile and pleasant; but the strong sons of Ishmael have still lived in the desert, a race of wanderers and dwellers in tents,

with all men's hands against them, and their hands raised against all mankind, for such was the prophecy that was made of old, and such is the law of fate; and in that spirit the Emir Mohamed al Raschid and his Abdali will die rather than submit to the Queen of the Faringis; but let those fight and fall who may; a time is coming, Nakib, when, in fulfilment of the prophecy which was made to our fathers, the tribes of Ishmael will conquer and exult before Him who hath heard me this night!"

And bowing his haughty head with a profound salaam as he concluded, the young merchant took up his sword and withdrew from the bungalow.

"Well," said Dreghorn, "what think you of this long yarn? It sounded mighty like a sermon."

"I like the way he told it," I replied; "yet it is quite at variance with Scripture, the last part especially; but I thought it better not to make comments."

"You were quite right; they are such slippery villains these Arabs, that he would have thought no more of putting his jambea into you, than I do of tossing off this glass of claret. But after I get the rest of our twenty-four and thirty-two pounders mounted on the fieldworks, neither Hagar nor Ishmael, nor all their rascally brood, will make much of us here in Aden! But there goes the drum for mess."

CHAPTER XXI.

YUSSEF THE MERCHANT.

A FEW days after our landing, the Rifles embarked in the Candahar for Bombay. We gave them a parting salute from Steamer Point, as the old ship, every corner of which we knew so well, cleft the clear waters of the gulf, and, favoured by a land breeze, bore away under a press to sail towards the Indian Ocean. After this, the whole force in Aden consisted of our regiment, a battalion of Bombay Native Infantry, two companies of artillery, a few sappers and the police of the place; one Jemidhar, one Duffidhar, and thirty-three Peons, an Indian word for foot soldier, though the name is originally derived from a class of vagabonds who were wont to visit the Spanish islands, and engage in every disorder that afforded a prospect of plunder.

O'Hara, our lieutenant-colonel, being the senior officer, commanded the whole garrison. We had re-established our mess in a comfortable and commodious house; there was no sickness, for this was the cool season; supplies of fresh provisions, grain, vegetables, poultry, &c., were brought through the Turkish wall on the backs of camels; we had Aden cows from the neighbourhood, and from Barburra, an African town in the Somanli territory, a constant

supply of sheep of the heavy-tailed species. The colony was evidently thriving, for in consequence of the provisions required by the garrison, by the inhabitants, and by the overland steamers, there were not less than two hundred laden camels entered Aden daily. Yussef the merchant supplied us with coffee, and came and went at all times between the garrison and interior, having a written pass signed by O'Hara, and a firman under the seal of the despot of Sana, procured by the interest of his friend the chief strangler, Booli Baba.

The constant rumours of the great preparations making against us by the warlike young emir of the Abdali, at the instigation of his sovereign, the cruel and treacherous Solyman, caused O'Hara to keep strong guards, and restrain Langley, De Lancy, and others, from wandering beyond the lines to shoot the small hyænas and beautiful foxes, with which the place abounds. Moonlight rambles in the little town were also forbidden, for the women hated us as much as the men; the bazaars were full of peril, and if one spoke to a female, a poniard was displayed before the words had well left one's lips.

This state of matters, together with the warning given by the young Mocha merchant to Major Dreghorn, made that officer and his gunners work indefatigably in repairing the old Turkish wall; in having the square towers and arrow holes, built by the Sultan Selim, put in service order, and having cannon mounted on the eminence of Dhurub-el-Hosh, and every other available place, that would enable us to sweep the narrow neck of land which unites Aden to the coast. This was formed only by a concretion of shells thrown on a ledge of rocks by the tides of the eastern and western bays, which met at the back of what had been an island, and united with the débris swept down by mountain torrents in the rainy season. But Yussef, who said he knew the emir well, smiled at all our preparations, which he predicted would be futile, and almost lost his temper when I asserted that, under our flag, Aden might become what it was of old, before its destruction by the Emperor Claudius—the centre of traffic between India and the Red Sea.

"No, no," said he; "Aden belonged to Ishmael, and his sons must have it or perish!"

This handsome and intelligent young dealer in *Mocha* interested me extremely. He often came to my bungalow and smoked a pipe, or partook of his own coffee; but I never could get him to enter the quarters of any other officer, or come to our mess, though repeatedly invited. Neither would he break bread or drink water with any other man in Aden; for I had won his regard by my knowledge of his native language, and the trifling admission that I had read the Koran, which I perused pretty much as I had done the "Thousand and One Nights."

A week after our arrival, the first steamer from Bombay arrived with the mails for Britain, and, I believe, every officer except myself,

had some dear friend at home, to whom he sent with her tidings of our prosperous voyage and safe arrival in Arabia Felix; but I had none to address, unless it had been my good old friend the dominie of Aikendean, whose kind heart, I have no doubt, a letter from me would have gladdened. But I thought not of him then, for I had other and dearer interests; and after questioning the captain of the steamer repeatedly, as to whether there was any intelligence of the Farnham Castle, and what might be the chances of her safety, I gathered little hope from his replies, though I trusted that some pleasant tidings might come by the *next* steamer. But week succeeded week, and month succeeded month, till I grew weary and sick of inquiry, for nothing whatever had been heard of the missing ship after the time of her touching at the Cape. The insurance had been paid on her cargo, and there was no doubt that she must have foundered in the Indian Sea, and that my poor Cecil and her sorrows were buried together in the deep!

Grief and suspense hung over me like a cloud of evil, saddening and embittering the first months of my service at Aden; and though I strove to thrust the incubus from my heart by attending energetically to the arduous duties of that solitary garrison, the gnawing thoughts would still return, and it was long before the bitterness of unavailing regret began to subside, and time brought with it something of content and calm.

But I am anticipating.

I hired a native servant named Jaffer, between whom and Buff there were continual brawls and quarrels; for he was a strange fellow, who took sullen fits, and when desired to saddle a horse or poneyclay a belt, would mutter under his beard,

"Allah! to-day I obey, but to-morrow I may command thee!"

This man afterwards proved to be a professional assassin, and staunch follower of the emir.

One day I was subaltern of the guard which furnished the sentinels for the Turkish wall—an ancient rampart, built of large flat stones, strengthened at intervals by towers having numerous loopholes, and cemented with chalk and fine gravel instead of lime. Rumours being still current of an expected rising among the Abdali, and of Arab horsemen hovering near us, O'Hara had increased the number of sentinels towards the mainland; and all the officers carried pistols or revolvers in their sashes. We had only been in Aden a fortnight, when three of our men were found killed, with their heads cut completely off, apparently by one slash of the Arabian *jambea*, or crooked dagger; and as I had to visit my sentinels, for one of my periodical rounds I chose the hour before sunrise, which is always so pleasant in the East, especially for a ride or ramble. The dew, which falls so heavily at Aden, was lying on the ground like newly fallen rain, refreshing those pretty flowers which grow in the crannies of the lava, especially in the cold season. The smart little monkeys were leaping from rock to rock and under that clear

blue sky the beautiful bay was like one bright mirror, which reflects only the purity of another, save where the gigantic crest of Serah threw its long black shadow between the yellow sands.

As I approached the post of the most advanced of our sentinels—a stone tower, on a pinnacle of the cliffs, near which an enormous old brass gun, covered with Turkish letters, lay half-sunk in the turf—I saw two Arabs conversing together, far down in the hollow beneath me; and there was something so picturesque and striking in their aspect, that I paused for a moment to observe them. One of them, by his scarlet turban, rich vest, and sword, I thought was Yussef, the handsome merchant; but the other, unlike the indolent Arabs of Aden, who do little else than bask half-nude in the sunshine, smeared with oil as a protection against its heat, smoking hemp-seed, living on oysters, the dregs of coffee, and the charity of the British and Simalees, was a true son of Ishmael. A turban of spotless white encircled his head, and contrasted with the darkness of his sunburned visage; a blue garment, like a large shirt, with the loose sleeves tied behind him, and a scarlet sash, were the principal parts of his attire, for his nut-brown legs were bare, and his sandalled feet were in his wooden stirrups. A sheepskin pelisse dangled from his shoulder by a cord; he sat on a magnificent horse, with limbs as slender as a young girl's arm; a sabre hung at his saddlebow, a long gun was slung at his back, and a tall, reedy lance, with a tassel under its steel head, was in his right hand, and its bright point glittered like a star in the gleam of the rising sun.

They were in earnest conversation, and I saw the horseman receive from the other a paper, which he kissed, and placed carefully in the folds of his turban. The place of their meeting was a secluded hollow, a chasm among the rocks, forming a long vista, the end of which terminated in the open country, and far beyond those fortifications which Selim built for four miles along the mountain ridges. In all this there was an air of secrecy which I did not like, and I was about to halloo to Yussef when his companion detected me. His first impulse was to unsling his long musket, his second, to relinquish it, and dash spurs into his horse, which shot away like the wind, striking fire from the rocks with its hoofs, and both steed and rider vanished from the ravine, almost as speedily as the sparks. When I turned to look for his companion, I could see nothing of him—he had disappeared. Many vague suspicions now occurred to me; and though I was not certain that the Arab in the red turban was my friend Yussef, yet I resolved to see him without delay. I now missed my sentinel, whose duty it was to have prevented any such meetings near his post. I quickened my pace, and on drawing near the sentry-box, saw the poor soldier, muffled in his grey greatcoat, lying on his back, half in, and half out of it, quite dead, for his head was completely severed from his body, and lay beside his shako, about a yard from him. The cat-like assassin had stolen upon him in the dark, and the thick folds of the coat and leather stock had alike

failed as a protection against the slash of the deadly jambea. The floor of the box was flooded with blood, some of which had trickled among the sand and ashes which form the soil of Aden.

This was the fourth assassination which had occurred, and it made us regard our Arabian neighbours with feelings of a very dubious nature. Though I had heard much of their treachery, I felt an emotion of disappointment and regret, that one who had prepossessed me so much as Yussef should prove a party in this affair.

When hastening back to the guardhouse, by the nearest way, I was met by Yussef himself!

He approached me with a smiling and unconcerned face, and I observed that he had a jambea in his sash, but that his turban was *blue*, and his attire was otherwise quite different from that of the Arab I had seen half-an-hour before. He wore a loose white shirt, over drawers of yellow cotton; a vest of yellow silk, with sleeves cut straight, the whole covered by an ample surcoat of pale blue cloth. The ends of his turban were fringed with silver, and hung down his back; a girdle of gold cloth sustained his dagger, and from its crooked ivory hilt hung a chaplet of those amber beads which the Mohamedans use in prayer.

"Peace be with you!" said he, greeting me in his usual manner, with a profound salutation, and expressed much astonishment and indignation at the murder of my poor sentinel; but he only smiled scornfully when O'Flannigan, who was captain of the guard, burst into a fit of rage, like a hot-headed Irishman, and swore at the Arabs as a race of cowardly Thugs and assassins.

"The nakib is rather hasty," he said, quietly, to me, as O'Flannigan despatched the corporal with a party of the guard to post another sentinel and bring in the dead man's body; "but the slain man was only a private soldier, and *they* die easily, especially by the sword. And what said the Prophet? The sword is alike the key to heaven and to hell."

"Oh, d—n your prophet," said O'Flannigan, buckling on his sword; "he seems to have some thriving followers."

The glittering eyes of Yussef flashed with fire, and he laid a hand on the hilt of his jambea—one of those crooked daggers which are made in Hadramaut.

"Just keep your hand off that, if you please, for my temper is maybe as short as your own," said O'Flannigan. "I was wrong, perhaps, to swear at your religion, for I do not think that any creed inculcates evil."

"But the recorded blasphemy will one day appear against you in letters of fire," replied Yussef, sullenly.

"Maybe it will, and maybe it wont," replied O'Flannigan, in his off-hand way; "and, by the powers, I'll tell you why. I once had an uncle who commanded a regiment of cut-throats, in the service of the sultan; and in the war against Russia, he sent so many hampers of pickled heads to Constantinople, that, in return, he was presented

with two beautiful Circassian damsels, and thus he was—as he wrote home to his mother, in Kerry—created a *pacha of two tails*, with two wives, the equal of whom she would not find in Tralee, Tyrone, nor Tipperary; and he turned Mussulman in a minute, for he was an old rapparee. So, Yussef, if I give ‘the Queen’s Own’ the slip here, and go the wrong way, maybe I’ll find a friend at court—do you perceive?”

This was somewhat unintelligible to Yussef, who could only understand that O’Flannigan’s uncle had been an Aga of Janissaries, and a true believer, which increased his estimation of the nephew.

In the forenoon of this day, after the guards were relieved, Langley, Montague, and a number of ours, were sitting in the smoking-room of the Parsee’s bungalow, listening to the accounts he gave us of the atrocities of the Abdali, when Yussef came noiselessly among us, spread a carpet near the sofa on which I was reclining in my white-duck undress, lighted his pipe, and listened in silence, but with an inflamed cheek and a sparkling eye.

Whatever the Parsee said was corroborated by the Jemidhar or black Lieutenant of the Peons, who chanced to be present; and tales of murder, robbery, cruelty, and abduction, each more revolting than the last, followed each other in rapid succession.

“What say you to all this?” some one asked of Yussef.

“Merely that they are liars and dogs,” he replied in his calm, deliberate way. “The Peon is a pagan, and the Parsee a hypocrite, though he pretends to be a devout Mussulman, and I wish he would repay the 4000 rupees he owes me. Once in three years he goes regularly a haji to the Holy City, and acting as guide or *delil* to some substantial widow, passes in ease and comfort through the long, sandy deserts of the sacred territory; then, after transacting (in lieu of praying) a little profitable business with the coffee-dealers and date-merchants of Mecca, he is regularly divorced by his companion, and pockets his fee; for these delils are only temporary husbands, whose services end with the pilgrimage.”

“I should like a little trip of that kind,” said O’Flannigan. “Do you know of any nice widow hereabout in want of a gentleman usher for Mecca?”

The Arab, who had not any idea of jesting, gave a cold smile, and said, gravely,—

“If you embrace Islam, and submit to the necessary process, it might be done—we shall see about it. But you would make the most strange of hajis, I fear me.”

“I am very sorry you have to sit here, while your countrymen are so much abused,” said I; “shall I desire the old Parsee to stop?”

“Let the black dog bark, if it pleases him—he is old. If it annoyed me, I would take my coffee and my pipe elsewhere; but I shall punish that pitiful Jemidhar of your Peons, ere long.”

“Are *you* an Arab of Yemen?” asked Langley, who had been observing the handsome young man with no small interest.

"I am," said he, proudly, "*al Arab el Araba*—an Arab of the Arabs! Do not judge of us by those dogs and sons of dogs here in Aden and around it, who serve the Faringis for rice and rupees. A little time, and you shall see the bright spears and the white turbans of the Emir Mohamed at your gates!" he continued, for the first time becoming excited, and sliding from broken English into fluent Arabic. "A storm is gathering in the deserts! The hundred free sheikhs of Sabber will come with all their lances; the tribes will gather from the green coffee mountains of Yemen—from the greener plains of Tehama, and the yellow sands of Hejaz. They will come upon you like the cloud of descending night—like the whirling dust of the desert, before which strong horsemen bow their heads or die! And on that night, when the *tecbir* of the Arab rings by the Turkish wall, it will be well for the pale Franks if, like the wicked tribe of Ad, they could lose the form of man! But, first, I must speak with yonder black liar," he added, following the Jemidhar, who had become, perhaps, alarmed by this angry outburst of the usually placid Arab, and had quietly slunk out of the bungalow.

Yussef bounded after him, in his haste overturning one of the Parsee's servants, an abominable Chinaman, who was skinning, and otherwise preparing for his own repast, a dead cat, which had been thrown out of one of the barrack-rooms.

"Come, gentlemen, out with your books," said De Lancy, knocking the ashes from his cigar; "we must have a regular set-to between the blackie and the darkie, both stripped to the waist."

"But what happened to the wicked tribe of King Ad?" asked I, filling up a sparkling glass of pale India ale, of which we drank enormous quantities.

"Ad," said the Parsee, "was king ob Aden in time ob old; his tribe were idolaters—bad—very bad, and for their wickedness turned into dose monkeys dat skip from rock to rock—dat it, sahib."

"What a fine specimen of an Oriental that fiery young Arab is," said Montague.

"I have asked him to our mess a dozen of times," said I, "but he invariably declines."

"You know de reason why, sahib?" asked the Parsee, leering through his almond-shaped eyes.

"No—not I."

"Because, if he eats with you, or touches salt beside any of you, he will not be able to kill you with a clear conscience—dat it, sahib."

"Oho."

"Mc warrant you, sahib, he know better how to handle de spear and mace, dan tell how dates sell at Mecca, or coffee at Medina; and de price of sabre at Damascus better dan bottles of Hejaz coffee, vit fourteen cup to de bottle. Booh!" he added, dancing with terror, "vat be dat, sahib?"

At that moment we heard a loud cry, followed by the clash of

sabres, and on hurrying out of the bungalow, found that the young merchant, after upbraiding the Jemidhar, had smote him on the beard, and drawn his jambea to defend himself, for the police officer had immediately unsheathed his own sword, and, aided by three of his armed Peons, who were passing, assailed the brave coffee dealer. The latter defended himself with great resolution, receiving their cuts on the crooked blade of his long dagger or short sabre, for the jambea is a compound of both these weapons.

Being tripped up from behind and hurled to the earth, his weapon broke just as we came out of Kufa's bungalow, and four sabres were flourished above him at once. Already the black hand of the furious Jemidhar, his heart boiling with such rage as Indians only feel, was tearing off the turban of the fallen man that he might have one fair slash at his naked throat, when I grasped his uplifted arm, drove away the Peons, and raised my Arab friend. He was panting with passion; his black eyes shone like two red coals, his sunburned cheek glowed with mantling blood; but the fierce mental tumult soon subsided, as he adjusted the muslin of his turban and smoothed his black moustaches. He still gazed, however, with wild but subdued wrath at the four Indians, who leaned on their sabres, and stood a little in the background.

"Go, go," said he, with inexpressible dignity and pride, "a time is coming when Yussef may repay this insolence. Harken, Jemidhar: thou seest this piece of wood," he cried, snatching up a branch of a withered mimosa tree; "by God, and by the life of Him who withered up this piece of wood, I will never forget the insult of to-day; and, by the same oath," he added, turning to me, and grasping both my hands in his, "I swear, that were I to live beyond the years of Lokman, yea, longer than the lives of seven eagles, I will never forget that *you* have been my friend and preserver."

The black visage of the Jemidar grew almost sky-blue on hearing the oath of the Arab, for it is the most sacred and terrible sworn by a people who seldom swear, and never take the name of the Creator in vain. I desired him to retire and leave the merchant in peace; and in one hour after, though the atmosphere was oppressively close and sultry, I saw Yussef leave Aden by the passage in the Turkish wall, and many weeks elapsed before he appeared among us again.

Next morning the body of the Jemidhar, minus the head and left hand, and with a slash across the stomach, the invariable finishing cut of an Arab jambea, was found by the patrol, not three yards from the door of his own bungalow; and on remembering his quarrel with Yussef, I began to have again some very unpleasant suspicions concerning that person's character; but these were removed when, after a diligent inquiry made by O'Hara, we proved, on examining our chain of sentinels, that after passing through the barriers on his camel, the young coffee-dealer had not again been seen, consequently we had only to look among the indolent Arabs of the town for the

author of those barbarous assassinations, the frequency of which were enough to make us suppose we had got into the territories of the Old Man of the Mountain. And our sentinels were now ordered to shoot dead every one who approached their posts at night without answering their challenge in our own language.

Next day the steamer from Suez brought the mails for India, and O'Hara and Major Dreghorn received orders to spare no pains in having Aden put in an efficient state of defence, especially towards the land side, as Mohamed, the daring emir of the Abdali, through the agency of a wandering santon, named Noor-ad-Deen, or Nouredin, was endeavouring to unite the sultans of Sana, Shugra, and Lahadj against us, and was striving to include in the league the sheikhs of all the Arab tribes; and that so unremitting was he in activity and hostility to the Franks, that he had been applying to the Pacha of Egypt, to the Schah of Persia, and to his people (the Dogs of Omar), and even to the distant Afghans, for his policy, cunning, and bravery were without a parallel in these cold modern times.

These orders, together with intelligence brought in by the camel-drivers and others, who conveyed provisions to us through the Turkish wall, made Colonel O'Hara strengthen our guards and outlying and inlying pickets; the officers had their swords sharpened, and they practised daily with pistols and revolvers; the regiments received a full supply of sixty rounds of ball-cartridge per man; and the cannon on the various batteries, especially those in the neighbourhood of Dhurub-el-Hosh, were kept in service order. For Arab horsemen fully accoutred, some of them from the distant hills, as we might know by the ancient fashion of their steel caps, shirts of mail, and bamboo lances; others with the wide sleeves of their white overshirts *tied behind* (an infallible sign of coming strife), had been seen galloping singly from village to village on the plains of Beitel-Fakih, and a whole cloud of horsemen, with spears and turbans and a red banner displayed, had passed through a gorge of the Coffee mountains near the ancient ruins of Dhafar.

Though we remained day and night in a state of suspense, the excitement occasioned by the expected attack was something new and pleasant after the monotony of our long sea-voyage, and the unbroken current of the sunny weeks we had spent since our landing. A considerable time passed away, and we heard nothing of the Emir and his Arabs; we drank our claret in peace, and all our care ended in the smoke of cheroots—but *the time* was coming!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TECBIR!

ONE dusky and cloudy night, in the middle of November, about an hour after our drummers had beaten tattoo, several of us were in the colonel's bungalow; we had a good supply of claret and cigars,

and having adjourned there from the mess-room were very merry, and amid the lively conversation of my brother officers, I strove to drown the thoughts of other times, and the certainty that two steamers from Bombay had now passed up the Red Sea, without having heard aught of the missing Indiaman; honest Popkins was just screwing up his flute, at O'Flannigan's quizzical suggestion, to favour us with something of his own composition, when the distant report of a musket, ringing among the mountain peaks, arrested him, and we all started, and looked at each other's faces inquiringly.

O'Flannigan paused in the act of lighting his cigar; De Lancy closed an old number of a sporting journal; Popkins tarried in screwing his flute, the colonel in cutting a pine-apple, and his servant in drawing a cork.

Another shot, another, and another followed!

We all rushed out, and each hurried to his quarters for his sword and pistols. Then we heard the voices of O'Hara, of Bently the adjutant, and the Sergeant-major Allan; the drum beating the long roll, and a bugle sounding the "turn out" *double quick!* while "The Arabs! the Arabs!" went from mouth to mouth in English or the guttural Hindostance of the Bombay infantry.

The two regiments, the Artillery and the small party of Sappers, stood to their arms, and as the dew was falling thick as rain, the soldiers had on their great coats, with pouches and belts above; but this was no advantage, for such was the heat of the atmosphere, even then, in the month of November, that they felt as if in a vapour bath.

The officer in command of the out-pickets (which had fallen back) now reported, that, so far as he could judge, the place was assailed by not less than five thousand Arabs. As these Mussulmans have no shipping or boats in the neighbourhood of Aden, and the sea around it swarms with sharks, O'Hara looked mainly to the defence of the isthmus, which is about thirteen hundred feet broad, and across which he had thrown up a fieldwork, or redoubt, with a few light guns, opposite the only approaches.

A wing of the regiment under the major and O'Flannigan hurried to defend this narrow and important passage, the only mode of access from the mainland. All the rocks, angles, and points, which led to it, were manned by musketry, while Dreghorn's field-pieces, loaded with grape and cannister, were prepared to sweep the whole neck of land from bay to bay.

With a subdivision of my company, I was stationed in a species of crow's-nest, formed of turf, on the pinnacle of a lofty basaltic rock, and as the dim crescent moon shone afar off through the silvery haze that rose from the hollows, I could see distinctly the splintered peaks that started up abruptly from the sea beneath, and the level sands with rough masses of rock jutting amid them, and round these the dark Arabs, clad only in their snow-white turbans and cummerbunds, stealing in small parties of two and three; or, despite the

sharks' teeth, the pointed muskets, and threatening bayonets, swirling like madmen against a strong current, each with his brass pistols in his turban, and his jambea or cimitar in his teeth, while a dense body of horsemen, with brandished spears, hovered on the mainland, and by the Turkish wall, joining their shrill unearthly yells with those of their comrades, who strove to reach and storm our batteries by close conflict.

A fire of grape, canister, and musketry was immediately opened upon them in every direction; those in the water ducked and dived like seals to avoid the showers of lead and iron that lashed the ocean into foam or made it start aloft into spouts and columns from its bed of shell and coral. Drenched, and all but breathless, they rushed up the slopes of the fieldwork, and when facing the flaming muzzles of our cannon, were thrust back by the levelled bayonet, or beaten down by the clubbed musket; in hundreds they continued to swarm through the water, up the glacis and the rocks, from which we securely shot them down and hurled them into the seething waves below. The rattle of the musketry, the cracking of Minié rifles from our Light company, and the deep hoarse boom of the cannon, especially from the high battery on Dhurub-el-Hosh, from whence the shot came whistling over our heads every moment, mingled with the shouts, wild cries, and dying yells of the frantic Arabs, were repeated with a thousand reverberations by the innumerable caverns of the shore, by the splintered pinnacles of Aden, and the hollow crater in which the village that represents that ancient city, lies cradled in ashes and the ruins of itself.

Incited by religious fury and native ferocity, drugged with opium till all sense of danger was lost, and blinded by desire for vengeance if victorious, and their hopes of Paradise if slain, they continued to pour up the glacis of the redoubt, climbing over piles of their own killed and wounded, and throwing themselves like tigers in the smoke, mist, and moonlight against our bayonets—grasping blade or muzzle with one hand while hewing or stabbing with the other—or firing and flinging their pistols right into the faces and breasts of our soldiers, many of whom were killed or severely wounded, shot, bitten, and even strangled; but all the Arabs who thus forced a passage into the place were bayoneted or brained by our rear rank men.

The silence, coolness, and steadiness with which the right wing of "the Queen's Own" stood shoulder to shoulder and poured their running fire over the embankment, formed a strong contrast to the yelling, the energy, the fury, and scrambling of the turbanned hordes, whose shouts of "Death to the Faringis!" were incessant; "Al-hamlah! al-hamlah (*Fight! fight!*)! Alijannah! Alijannah (*Paradise! Paradise!*)!" Such were the cries by which they animated each other, while shrill beyond all others rose the incessant TECBIR—"Allah Ackbar!"

"Load the four centre guns with cartridge shot, for the darkies

are coming down by the Turkish wall," cried Major Dreghorn, who had hurried breathlessly from Dhurub-el-Hosh; "look sharp there, bombardiers, or they will spear you at your guns."

At that moment the haze cleared a little; the moon shone out more brightly, and I saw the cloud of white-robed horsemen defiling through a gap in the ruined rampart of Selim, and descending the steep lava rocks from thence with miraculous precision and headlong speed. They were led by the Emir of Abdali—Mohamed al Raschid, or, *The Just*—as we knew by the little red banner which one of them bore on his spear; and nothing could be more picturesque or gallant than the appearance of this Arab chief, as his fleet horse glided like a shadow towards the scene of strife; his steel cap, with a tippet or flap of mail hanging over his neck, and a bird of Paradise plume floating above it; his mail shirt of fine iron rings, that glittered like frost on moonlit leaves, and his brandished lance with a tuft of ostrich feathers around its steel point, and a light round shield on his bridle arm. Accoutred thus, he led on his troop of not less than a thousand horsemen, who spurred in a wild and confused mob against the glacis of the redoubt.

The voice of the emir was rich and harmonious, and it ascended at times to the cliff where I was posted; and twice I heard him cry, in the purest Arabic—

"Forward! let us cut a path to Paradise through these red Faringis! let us overthrow and hurl them from Aden, even as Ali threw the idols of Khozaites from the summit of the Kaaba!"

"Alhamlah! alhamlah!" yelled the white-turbaned horde, as with all their snorting horses and flashing spears, they essayed what none but Arabs would attempt against a rampart. Like a river that has burst its banks, they rushed with fearless audacity up the glacis, and boldly and frantically, but fruitlessly, strove to reach its summit, and slay us at our cannon, by thrusting their long spears over the parapet, or through the wide splays of the embrasures; and in this attempt their half-naked foot soldiers were all mingling with them.

For a moment there was a terrible struggle, and our hearts beat quick, for if O'Flannigan's men gave way, nothing but the most barbarous extermination awaited us; but the shower from the four field pieces, loaded with musket shot, when aided by the manner in which my subdivision from the crow's nest enfiladed the Arabs by a sweeping flank fire, completely routed them, though the emir made the most desperate attempts to leap his horse *over* the breastwork, and, after exchanging several blows with Major Dreghorn, at whom he seemed to have a special animosity, was forced to retire, when his men fled with the utmost precipitation, leaving the narrow path to the Turkish wall, and the reedy salt marsh which lies on the landward side of the peninsula, strewn with dead and dying men and horses, and with lances, bucklers, pistols, and sabres; while the water around us was covered with the corpses of those who were shot,

drowned, or bitten by sharks, when falling wounded from the rocks. In this encounter, Major Dreghorn disdained the ordinary regulation sword, and had wielded a ponderous handspike.

We had not an officer hit in the body; O'Hara had the pompon of his shako shred away by a sabre; Captain Maule had a lance run through his coat, and Langley's sword-hilt was broken by a pistol shot; but we had twelve privates and eight sepoy killed, and about thrice that number wounded, while not less than four hundred Arabs were left behind, killed and wounded, in the course of an hour's conflict, during which many must have been hit who escaped.

We hailed the daylight with joy, for we were drenched with perspiration, and the demand for fluids—water, sherry, claret, and pale Bass—would have made one suppose we had been swallowing fire.

Aware that it would not be at all conducive to our health to leave the dead Arabs and their horses to swelter under a noonday sun, exposed to the reflected heat which is thrown from the surrounding rocks, and renders the temperature there so much greater than the thermometer usually indicates, we buried a number before sunrise in a deep chasm, which tradition averred to have been made in the Turkish war, by an emir of the Abdali, by one blow of his cimitar, when hewing down a gigantic aga, through whom the blade passed and split the rocks below! It was near the sea, and there we covered them up with loads of lava, earth, and rubbish. As for their comrades who floated in the bay, the sharks so soon disposed of them, that before next morning not a vestige of one was visible. The wounded Arabs, of whom Dr. Splint and our surgeons took every care, seemed in no way grateful for their attention, but repeatedly mocked and spat at them, and tore off their dressings, as they wished to die and reach that promised Paradise of the brave Moslem, from which such benighted pagans as "the Queen's Own" regiment of infantry were totally excluded.

"Our lives are in the hands of Allah!" they exclaimed; "with Him we trust them rather than with the Franks."

After this night we had no more *alertes* from the Abdali for a considerable time; but as we knew that their daring emir, who was intriguing with the sultan of Jaffa, Sheik Ibrahim, and other powerful leaders, would never rest, O'Hara and Major Dreghorn left nothing undone to render Aden as strong as possible by sea and land, and many new defences were projected. Among these were a strong wall flanked by piers of obstruction, running into deep water; the erection of batteries on the coal depôt at Flint Island, and also on the rocky isle of Serah, to protect the eastern bay, and gunboats to defend the west; for all of which a larger sum of money was required than our parsimonious government at home were willing to spend.

Incited by the example of O'Hara, we worked at these new fortifications with great ardour, for his personal activity was remark-

able. An hour before daylight every morning he paraded the working parties, and went from point to point of the works, remaining mounted sometimes for four hours; all the labour was conducted under his own eye, and he added many valuable suggestions to that able plan which was drawn up for the defence of Aden by Lieutenant S——, a talented officer of the Royal Artillery.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE EMIR.

In these events I found a species of relief from the bitter thoughts which had so long haunted me, for my mind had always reverted painfully to the most minute items of my last meeting with Cecil—the place and her words—the time and her features; and then, the piece of silent wreck-wood that lay floating on that sunny eastern sea.

To punish the Abdali for their attack, two companies of ours, with a fieldpiece, the whole commanded by Major Dreghorn, K.H., of the Royal Artillery, passed out of Aden next day, to burn some of their wretched villages and destroy their growing crops of wheat and barley, which are generally sown in October, and reaped by the *roots* in April.

It was my fortune to form one of this party, which was in light marching order, with shell jackets and forage-caps; we filed through the Turkish wall, passed the salt marsh, and entered the open country an hour before daylight, on the second morning after the night attack.

When dressing for this duty, I missed my native servant, Jaffer, and was not without suspicions that the fellow might have left the garrison to warn the Arabs of our foray; and this ultimately proved to be the case, for he avoided our sentinels by daringly swimming to the nearest landing place, and rousing the country people, as we afterwards learned.

We marched in the direction of Abiün, keeping somewhat inland, with the fieldpiece in our centre. The country seemed to be totally deserted, and after proceeding about ten miles, and burning a few Arab houses of canes and reeds, and setting a match to the ripening crops of rice and maize, so that the fields were soon sheeted with a flame that rolled before the wind, and scathed them to blackened stubble, we halted, and prepared to retrace our steps, thinking that we had done mischief enough among the poor Yemenees for one morning.

Dreghorn gave the command to wheel about, and we retired in the same order, with the fieldpiece and its tumbril in the centre. Langley had command of the advanced guard, consisting of twelve privates, and when we entered a defile, where the withered sugar

canes and the wild date-trees grew thickly on the sloping banks, he suddenly heard the sound of a timbrel, and the notes of the gaspah, or reed flute, used by the Arabs, on which he halted; then, observing the head of a spear to glitter above the cane tufts, he desired a soldier to discharge his musket in that direction, and a cry arose of "the darkies! the darkies are on us!"

In a moment we saw a red flag with a golden crescent, and the heads of a host of spears, all tasselled with silk or tufted with feathers, flashing among the trees, while the wild shrill *tecbir* reverberated from side to side in the hollow pass.

"Allah ackbar! Allah ackbar! Alhamlah!"

Langley, with his little party, had barely time to reach the main body, when not less than a thousand furious Arabs rushed upon both our flanks at the full speed of their swift and nobly trained horses.

Most of our assailants were sons of the desert, sinewy, and dark-eyed; fiery in spirit and resolute in aspect, and all clad in white or blue shirts, with their breasts bare. They were armed with lances twelve feet long, or iron maces with wooden handles; all had round targets of wild bulls hide, crossed by bars of iron, with pistols at their saddles and swords at their girdles.

"Square against cavalry!" cried Major Dreghorn; "form square, my brave lads, as you best may, and down with this Arabian scum!"

The two companies speedily threw themselves into a kind of hollow square, and opened a sharp fire on the Arabs, many of whom were tumbled from their saddles, while the rest were swept up the hill-side, on which we got into motion again, and continued to retreat in square as fast as the rugged nature of the ground and our awkward formation would permit; but again and again the wild Yemenees rushed upon us with their light lances, right up to our flashing muzzles, and many a severe thrust was given and deadly shot returned.

"Shoot that rascal in the steel jacket!" cried Dreghorn, who towered in his stirrups above us all. "Down with him. He is the Emir Mohamed!"

Through gaps in the smoke I could see this dashing warrior leading on his horsemen, lance in hand, with his burnished shirt of mail, his steel cap inlaid with rich Damascene work, surmounted by a plume, and encircled by a roll of muslin; his black waving beard, his dark eyes full of fire, and with his proud horse arching its beautiful head lower than the silver buckler which shone on the rider's arm. Four or five times he dashed furiously at us, but was always driven back, and nearly unhorsed, and as our men always fired at him with their bayonets fixed, never a ball went near him, until private Philip Messenger, of my Company, shattered his lance to pieces, on which he drew his sword, and crying, "Alijannah! Alijannah! death to the Faringis!" rode again up to our very muzzles,

and tried to hew the strong steel bayonets off the musket-barrels

The perspiration rose like hazy steam from our men, who had all relinquished their leather stocks, and opened their jackets for greater freedom.

An old Arab, with a beard as white as his turban, rode constantly by Mohamed's side, and vied with him in his efforts to break our brave little square.

"Frank," said Langley, "'pon my soul, I should know the face of that old chowderhead with the beard!"

"So should I, and may I be shot," I exclaimed, "if he is not Jaffer, my servant! the scoundrel—the spy, he has informed the Abdali of our march, and hence this ambush in the pass!"

"Lend me your musket, Massinger," said Langley, taking the weapon from the soldier the moment he had rammed a cartridge down; "I should like to have a pop at that fellow."

Fred took a deliberate aim—fired, and I saw the white turban sink and vanish in the crowd; but whether it was the horse or man, or both, that had fallen I knew not. However, his fate seemed to excite the emir anew, for we again saw the gleam of his sword as it rasped along our ridge of steel, and heard his voice close to our ranks.

"Bismillah!" I could hear him crying, "forty cotton turbans have been this day exchanged for crowns of glory in Paradise! forty leather saddles for the laps of the houris! On—on, for the sword is the key of heaven, and battle the path to it! Kill—kill! Alhamlah!"

Fired by his words and example, the Arab horsemen rushed again to meet the death and havoc they coveted, and as their bravery exceeded all rational valour, they actually forced the front face of our retreating square, and a terrible smashing with clubbed muskets ensued. Several of our soldiers were speared and trodden under hoof and heel; the gunners stood upon their now useless cannon, and hewed at the Arabs with their sabres, shredding off the heads of their lances, or wrenching them from their grasp by main strength of arm.

"Keep together, my lads—together for your lives!" cried Dregorn, whose blue artillery uniform made him conspicuous among our red coats; "I have not the honour to belong to you, but I have the honour to command you. Keep shoulder to shoulder, and show that you are men of 'the Queen's Own!'"

Finding the square almost broken, the brave Dreghorn, in great fury, spurred his horse right against the emir, and a gallant hand to hand combat ensued between them. The Arab was active as a lynx, and an able swordsman; the Scot was not less so, but he had neither the advantage of a shield nor a well-trained horse; thus the emir, with keen fiery eyes, and a Damascus blade edged like a razor, rode warily three times round him. As I had more than enough to do in defending myself, and keeping the Arabs from breaking quite into the heart of us and slaying the gunners, I could only obtain at times a

glimpse of poor Dreghorn, as he was driven several yards off among the sugar canes; but animated by something of the old Arab chivalry, no other lance or sabre gave a thrust or blow to aid the emir's single hand, and thus for nearly three minutes they continued fighting, while our soldiers sent shot after shot, and the officers emptied their revolvers, without effect at the chief of the Abdali.

The words of Yussef, when he said that the emir had sworn to have Dreghorn's head, flashed upon my memory, as I heard Mohamed suddenly cry, and in *English*, too—

"Dog! I had vowed by the Prophet's beard to have your head, so you may as well yield it in peace!"

"Not if I can keep it, you blackavised loon!" said Dreghorn, with a laugh, as he dealt at the Arab a blow which would infallibly have slain him, had not the sword to which he trusted his life been one of the regulation rubbish which are forged at Sheffield. It turned in his hand, and broke like a glass rod on the polished helmet of the emir, whose eyes shone with a satanic glare as he raised his arm, and dropped his long straight Arab sword behind his head for the purpose of dealing one deadly backhanded blow at Dreghorn's neck, but suddenly he lowered his better weapon, saying, nobly,—

"Go—though Mohamed has sworn to have thy head, thou hast yet one chance for life—for it were a pity that a soldier so valiant should be hurled at once to hell. Go—but remember, that the next time we meet, by the camel of Mecca, we shall not part thus!"

Meanwhile, we had been pushing rapidly along the pass, and were soon within sight of the high pinnacles of Aden, from whence our sentinels could see the smoke of the musketry. An alarm was soon given, and O'Hara, with the rest of the regiment, and four field-pieces, came out, double-quick, to our assistance. We had several men killed, but left no wounded behind us, for the Arabs beheaded them all.

Thrice I nearly lost my life in this infernal mêlée: first, from a dismounted Arab, who seized me by his teeth and hands as he lay writhing on the ground with a bayonet wound in his breast; but a wheel of the fieldpiece as it passed over his body freed me from him; the second escape was from a pistol shot, which was turned by my belt plate, and the third was from the lance of a horseman who had forced his way between the files of our front rank. I caught the long slender weapon by the tuft of scarlet silk which adorned its head, and broke the shaft; then the Arab grasped me by the throat and raised his iron mace to dash out my brains, when his *own* were blown in his comrades' faces, by private Massinger, who had placed the muzzle of his musket close to the Mussulman's ear. Twenty similar encounters took place during that contest, which lasted nearly half-an-hour, under a hot and brilliant morning sun, and which extended over more than a mile of ground, that was strewn with killed and wounded Arabs in their white over-shirts, or

by their black horses rolling and kicking in the agonies of death. Here and there lay the headless trunk of a poor red coat, but fortunately these were few and far between. In their dying tortures many of the Arabs grasped the muskets of our men, and thrust the bayonets further into their writhing bodies, that, with their iron maces or the keener jambea they might deal one last blow for vengeance and the Prophet, and so expired with the groan of death, the *tecbir*, and their blood all mingling together on their lips.

Captain Maule and Lieutenant Montague were severely wounded; Popkins lost the tip of an ear, and many other officers suffered from sword-cuts and lance thrusts, before the appearance of O'Hara and his welcome reinforcement made our assailants decamp, by suddenly drawing off towards the mountains; and then, as they retired, we wheeled round our hiterto unused fieldpiece, and sent a few round-shot after them. We gave them a shout of defiance as they disappeared among the green coffee groves which crowned a neighbouring hill, and the last horseman, before he descended on the opposite side of the summit, raised himself in his stirrups, and we saw his bright sword flash in the sunshine, as he waved it thrice in bravado. Then the distant sound of the terrible *tecbir* was wafted towards us, as he disappeared.

This last horseman was the valiant Mohamed—the emir himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JAFFER.

FROM the two preceding chapters, which contain little more than may be found in the columns of our Indian papers for that month, I now turn to my own adventures.

"Well, a braver or a more generous fellow than the emir never drew a sword," said Dreghorn, as the whole force, breathless and weary with their exertions under a hot sun, halted in the town of Aden. "Gladly would I make him aware that I think so, by presenting him with a handsome pair of pistols, or a silver pipe, Arab though he be. What say you, O'Hara?"

"I expect to see your passage of arms faithfully delineated in the next Illustrated News that comes by Suez," said our colonel; "and a mighty fine sketch it would make, with plenty of smoke and spears in the background. But take my advice, and keep the pistols for your saddle and the pipe for your friends."

"How many officers of our party are wounded?" asked Dreghorn of Sergeant Edmonds, who was making up the list.

"All except Mr. de Lancy," replied Edmonds, advancing his fusée.

"Ah, my good fellow," said he, with his inveterate lisp, "then pray don't leave me out."

"Put him down, slightly," said Doctor Splint, drily; "Mr. de Lancy, slightly wounded. It will sound all the same in the *Gazette*."

"And help me with a bill I mean to draw on my old gentleman at home. Thank you, doctor."

The soldiers were at once dismissed; the wounded to the hospital and the others to clean their arms and to dine.

The first person who met me at the door of my bungalow was Jaffer, my native servant, with a broad grin on his swarthy visage.

"You here, Jaffer?" I exclaimed.

"Where would I be, master?" he asked.

"I could have sworn that I saw you amongst the Arabs who attacked us."

"Pull my beard, if I was! I have not been out of Aden."

"These fellows are as much alike as eggs, sir," said Buff, as he received my sword and belt; "they are all the same, with crooked noses and hawk-eyes. The Albert steamer has come in from Suez, and there are several letters and papers for you and Mr. Langley."

The former were for Fred, and one of the latter for me; we hurried into my bungalow, ordered Buff to prepare a luncheon of cold fowl, the invariable claret and pale Indian ale. We then threw off our jackets, and with nothing on but our shirts and trowsers, lounged each on a sofa, with the covered table between us, Fred perusing his letters and I my paper, which had been sent by some garrison friend from Chatham.

After lunch, any one who had seen me laughing over Punch, and Fred wandering through the closely printed mazes of the Times and Chronicle, would have supposed that we had just returned—not from a deadly conflict with the wild warriors of the desert—but from a quiet morning ride in some green lane at home. Suddenly Fred raised his voice, with the accent of one who sees something important.

"Halloo!" said I, "what is the matter? have the Russians broken into India, or taken Constantinople?"

"By Jove, here is the marriage of Jack Howard, of the Buffs, to Blanche Palmer, by the Right Reverend the Bishop of London, at St. George's, Hanover Square."

"Ha! ha!" said I, "after running off to Gretna, and having a red-hot marriage over the anvil, they have had the affair done in style, to satisfy the scrupulous."

"I suppose that Jack, although checkmated, will touch a round sum by this move."

"I should not wonder—old Palmer was worth a mint in money."

"And the coal-pits, too," added Fred; "perhaps Letty is married also by this time. She was a dear girl at a *deux temps and galope*—back her against all Britain for both! I would give the world for a round dance with Letty now—but, alas! we have no such girls in Aden!"

"Please, Fred, put that paper—I was about to say in the *fire*."

"I wish, with all my heart, that we were where one is necessary."

"Tear it in pieces then. Some of my good-natured friends in Chatham have sent it here."

"Specially—for there is a cross at the paragraph—and the address looks very like Letty's pink invitation notes."

"As the mess have forgotten all about Blanche, I have no wish to remind them of her now."

"I should not be surprised to see her here," said Langley; "another wing of that fowl, please—thank you. Jack may join his regiment by the overland route."

"If Jack knows, as we do, what it is to broil under a tropical sun, he will stay at home and look after his pretty wife and her funded property."

"I will cut out the passage, for London papers are more precious than banknotes here."

"Were I Jack, I should be sorry to see so charming a girl as Blanche turned yellow as a buttercup by the swamps of Calcutta or the sun of Bombay."

"Ah—yes—pass the claret; when a man marries he should cut the service—sell out and be off."

Luncheon over, Buff and Jaffer were removing the cloth, when Langley, who was looking through the Venetian window-blind, said,

"Here comes an Arab dandy perched between the humps of a camel. What a figure we would cut at Epsom or the Derby with cavalry of that kind! What a joke it would be!"

"Who is he, Buff—is he coming here?"

"Mr. Yussef, the coffee-man, sir."

"Well, 'pon my soul," said Fred, "he is a devilish cool fellow to venture into Aden after our late affair, and with all the suspicions we have against him about those assassinations."

Yussef rode straight to the door of my bungalow, where he dismounted, and gave the bridle of his camel to Jaffer, who received him with an Arabic salutation and the most profound respect.

He entered with a low salaam; I received him as usual, proffered him a pipe, a place on the sofa, and a cup of coffee, of which he said he had many packages to sell. I told him somewhat coldly that I did not think he acted wisely in entering Aden, while our feeling against the people of his country was so bitter; and hinted, that several of our men had been slain, and that he was suspected of knowing the murderer, or at least of being a friend of the black-bearded Mohamed.

He stroked his own, which was a fine reddish brown, with great impatience, and repeatedly took the pipe from his mouth to stare at me, with eyes expressive of quiet scorn, at the suspicions to which I referred.

"A friend of Mohamed-al-Raschid—a friend of the emir? I am indeed a friend, but in heart only, for he fights for his country. I

nave not the honour to be more than known to him. I am a humble dealer in packages of Mocha and bottles of Hejaz coffee. A warrior only can be the friend of Mohamed. They who suspect me of assassination think falsely."

"It has been said so, friend Yussef," said Fred, bluntly.

"'Tis a lie! a fable of Tasm, the father of dark history!" cried the Arab, passionately; "but I know the murderer of your men."

"You do?" I exclaimed; "then who is he?"

"One who in cunning equals the sorcerers of Oman, and whose valour excels his cunning. Call Jaffer."

"Do you think the assassin is Jaffer?" I asked, somewhat startled to find those acts of blood so nearly concerned myself.

"I do not say so, but I will be content to renounce Paradise and bequeath myself to Eblis, if I do not find the slayer of your soldiers."

"Another of our Peons was murdered yesterday."

"Summon your servant, nakib."

Jaffer was soon brought in by Buff, who had no great love for him, and he stood before us, with a hang-dog expression in his deep stealthy eyes and on his swarthy visage. Yussef said something to him, which was spoken forcibly and rapidly in Arabic, and which I did not understand; but I saw that Jaffer gave him a glance full of reproach, that he trembled and almost grew pale. He then placed his hands upon his head, crossed them on his breast, and bent his eyes on the carpet.

"Jaffer!" said the merchant, solemnly, "by the truth of the blessed Koran—by the blackness of the Kaaba—and by the bones of the Prophet, I conjure you to tell us (if you know) who committed those assassinations which have seven times reddened Aden with the blood of the Franks?"

"It was I—Jaffer," he replied immovably.

"You?" I exclaimed, snatching up my sword, which lay on a side table; "you, Jaffer?"

"By the Grot of Mount Hara, it was."

"And at whose command?"

"The emir's; besides, the precept of the Prophet requires us to destroy all Kafirs."

"Rascal; you might have destroyed me in my sleep!"

"Yea, at any time; but you speak my tongue, and have been kind to me; Jaffer is an Arab—he never forgets a friend, or forgives an enemy."

"And you fought against us this morning?"

"Yes; beside the bridle of Mohamed," he replied, while his eyes filled with a wolfish glare; "and thanks to the Prophet, who gave me ears to hear, eyes to see, and a tongue to tell, there is not a soldier in your ranks, or a bullet in your pouches, but the emir knows their number; an order is scarcely issued by your Dola, but it is known in his tents, and there is not a cannon on your batteries without its weight and position being known to him; but I will

slay no more of the Faringis here, for I have completed *seven*, the mystical number, and now my task is ended."

I sprang towards Jaffer, whose eyes flashed savagely, as he grasped his jambea, but Yussef flung down his pipe and interposed with a smile.

"Buff, call the main guard—Langley, this man is both a spy and assassin!"

"Begone—fly!" cried the merchant, raising the green blind.

Jaffer bounded through the open window and rushed across the barrack-yard, with his jambea in his hand, like a Malay running a muck. On seeing him approaching thus, the sentinel at the gate charged his bayonet to stop him, but he passed through the barrier like a flash of lightning. Langley (who had not understood the half of what passed) fired my pistols after him, but both balls missed.

"The devil!" said he, "my hand shakes after this morning's work."

On seeing this, one of our advanced sentinels levelled at Jaffer, and fired. The bullet knocked off his turban. The eyes of Yussef glared, for his sympathies were evidently with the fugitive.

"On, on!" he cried, clapping his hands, though Jaffer could no longer hear him; "to the hills, to the hills! on, on—may the scorpions of Cashan sting thee if thou art taken!"

He took the road which led directly to the main pass, and escaping several musket shots, disappeared among the Munsoorie range of hills, where the Duffadhar with his black Peons hunted for him until nightfall, but in vain; and this savage Mussulman, who was well worthy of being a follower of the "Old Man of the Mountain," or Prince of the Assassins, was seen in Her Britannic Majesty's garrison of Aden no more.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH I BECOME AN AMBASSADOR.

THOUGH the discovery that the assassin of so many of our men was my own servant was very unpleasant, to say the least of it, and calculated to raise suspicions against every Arab in Aden, I was gratified that all doubts regarding the honour and probity of my friend Yussef were removed; and he now invited Langley and me to the bungalow of the Parsee to have a glass of ginger-beer from his cool deep cellars, which were dug far below the foundations of the hotel; for however humble that beverage may seem at home, we deemed it no ordinary luxury in a climate where during the south-west monsoon, the thermometer rises to 104° in the shade; where scarlet cloth will fade into pinkish white, and the blade of a drawn sword grows hot even under the shadow of a tree.

"I see dark looks on all sides of me here," said Yussef, as we proceeded to the hotel; "all ties are now for ever broken between you and the Arabs—I can come to Aden no more."

"I am amazed you could venture in after our late affairs with your people!" said Langley; "you are indeed a bold fellow."

"I have my pass or protection; besides, Kufa, the Parsee, owes me a great sum of money—4000 rupees, which he must pay me to-day."

After our beer was quaffed in the cool shady room, where the sea-breeze passed in through the Venetian blinds on one side and out at those on the other, we had quite a scene between the Parsee and the Arab, of whose loan the former cunningly and basely denied all knowledge or remembrance; and for a time, Yussef preserved his temper with admirable equanimity.

"I beseech you to consider again," said he, for the fifth or sixth time; "thou mayst perhaps have forgotten—such things will happen. Believe me, O Mirza Kufa, that the paltry 4000 rupees are nothing to me, but I abhor being doubted. Think again—it was at Mocha, on the 10th day of Moharram—that is the 3rd of May according to the Christian year—I lent you the money to aid in building this bungalow."

But the Parsee answered invariably and doggedly,

"It all one fable, sahib; me never borrow, nor require to borrow, and I am ready to gib my *sowgund* (oath) before the Kadi or the commandant."

"By my hopes of never losing milk or winter provision, yea, by every stone in the walls of Mecca, I swear thou didst!" cried the young merchant, passionately, as his hand trembled about the carved ivory hilt of his jambea; a motion which did not escape the quick glittering eyes of the Parsee, who then said,

"Sahib will have a receipt, an acknowledgment, for so mosh money?"

"Dog and wretch, there is dirt on your turban!" cried the merchant, who could no longer govern his fury. "I have the acknowledgment, but I am an Arab of the Arabs, and believed that my word would have sufficed for thee, thou wretched Guebre; yet, since thou wilt have it so, here is thy precious receipt."

The Parsee grew a little pale as Yussef drew from a species of pocket-book which was stuck in his girdle, a slip of paper, on seeing which he also changed colour, and grew pale as ashes.

Lo! the writing had vanished from the white paper like the miraculous verse which the Prophet wrote before Abdallah Ebn Masud, and which disappeared from his tablets in a night. It was blank, and scarcely a vestige of writing remained upon it; for it had been written with that species of ink which is only sold by Jews, and which begins to fade away from the moment of writing until it passes from the paper and leaves no trace behind. The honest Arab was thunderstruck! he examined his note-book again and again; but

the face of the vile Parsee was radiant with joy and malignant triumph.

"Aha, sahib—who lie now? who have dirt on him turban? who right, eh?" he asked, adjusting his long gown, while he grinned like a baboon.

"Guebre," said the Arab, nobly, "if thou hadst pled poverty, I would have given thee these 4000 rupees, which to me are about as valueless as a handful of desert sand; hadst thou asked for longer grace, yea, until my beard was grey as thine own, it had been given thee; but thou hast most infamously deceived me; yet a time for vengeance will come, O wretch! and when Azrael, the angel of death touches thee with one hand, in the other he will hold the receipt of Yussef. *You* do not think I have lied!" he asked, suddenly turning to those officers who had witnessed this strange scene.

"On my honour, Yussef, I do not," said I.

"Nor I," added Langley; "but I believe our Parsee to be a thorough-bred rogue."

"Good, good," said Yussef, carefully folding the now blank and useless receipt, and replacing it in his repository, while the Parsee slunk out of the coffee-room; "this testimony to the truth of Yussef of Mocha will bring good fruit."

At that moment, Buff, erect as a post, presented himself, saying that the colonel wished to see Mr. Langley and me in the Orderly Room. Desiring Yussef to wait for me at my quarters, we hurried to the colonel, with whom we found a number of officers assembled.

O'Hara, who was smoking a handsome hubble-bubble, the tobacco in which was mixed with apple paste, informed us, that by instructions received from government, he was to form an alliance, if possible, with the Sultan of Sana, who was also lord of the wealthy and fortified city of Mocha, for the purpose of obtaining his aid, by means of gold, against the Abdali, the Futhali Arabs, and other Shiekhs, who were hostile to us, and thus to put in operation the old—and, I am sorry to say it—wicked policy of England, by setting the people of the country against each other, so that we might have a safe opportunity for further encroachment. But the chief object was to repress the emir and a mad santon, who styled himself Regenerator of the Faith, and was secretly organizing a more combined attack on Aden.

"I must send at least one officer as an envoy to this Sultan of Sana, whose capital is distant many days' journey. The mission is fraught with danger, gentlemen," continued the colonel, "for the Abdali and other tribes lie between us and the hills in one direction, and the Subbeih Arabs between us and Mocha in another. We know sufficient of both to believe that any attempt to pass through their territories is all but impossible, unless with a strong armed force; and to crown all, the Sultan or Imaum is one of the most abominable tyrants that ever encumbered the earth—an intractable old monster, who never passes a day without having the sabre, the bowstring, or

poison in operation. Yet his people look upon him as lord of all the world, and a great deal more; so, you see, the prospect is not a very inviting one. I would go in person, but to what end, for I know not his gibberish, unless a little of the Choctaw, which I learned in America, would suit. My envoy must be thoroughly master of the language, and a cunning fellow, who will flatter old Bluebeard into a treaty with us."

"I am ready to be off in a minute," said O'Flannigan.

"But you don't speak Arabic, Pat," said O'Hara, with surprise.

"What's the odds? Arabic? No; I heard enough of it the other night to serve me a life time, when these Abdali were all yelling like the devils of a climate hotter even than Aden."

"The Imaum does not speak English, it appears."

"Then maybe the ould baste speaks Irish, and if so, I am his man. I hear them always swearing by the Holy Grot of Mount Hara, and if that has not a very Irish sound, I know not what has. It might pass for a shooting-box on your estate, Colonel; it should belong to the O'Hara family, at least."

"By the way," asked some one, "what does that mean, Hilton?"

"The cavern where Mahomet usually secluded himself, and had his pretended visions with the angel Gabriel."

"You long-headed Scotsmen know everything."

"I should not wonder," added Montague, "if this old Sultan proves to be a countryman of yours; I have heard of one who became viceroy of Egypt."

"I am sorry to select any of you, gentlemen, for a dangerous duty," said O'Hara; "but, upon my honour, I don't know of any man among us better able to perform this service than Hilton. Will you undertake it?"

"Cheerfully," said I.

"But some one must accompany you."

Langley, O'Flannigan, and Montague offered themselves; but as the latter was suffering from a wound, the Irish captain was too reckless, and as Fred was my old "chum," I found myself compelled to make a choice in his favour.

"Then there are those devilish Abdali," said the Colonel; "how are they to be outflanked?"

"There are military shiekhs who will guard a traveller from town to town for a handsome consideration," said I; "but how are we to communicate with them?"

"Ask advice from your friend the coffee merchant," said Montague; "he is an intelligent fellow, and may, I think, be trusted."

The orderly-room sergeant, or clerk, was despatched to my baggage for Yussef, who soon appeared among us, and bowed to all with a respect that was somewhat tinged with excitement, but it immediately vanished when he was informed that I wished an escort to Sana, through those terrible Abdali and other frontier tribes who were the curse of our new settlement.

"The nakib," said he, "has been the friend of Yussef; under the hand and seal of the emir, he will procure for him a letter of protection, and his other friend, the shiekh Abdulmelik of Dhafar, will escort him to the city of the Imaum and back again in safety, with the hundred spears of his tribe."

"Hilton, consider well," said the colonel, seriously; "can you rely on this man?"

"Cursed be he who misleadeth the stranger or diggeth a pit for the blind!" said the Arab, with inexpressible dignity, for he understood what O'Hara had said; "I will travel with the nakib (he has ever been my friend!) towards the city of the Imaum, or I will bring him a letter from Mohamed, and remain here in Aden a hostage till his return."

"Nothing could be fairer; I beg your pardon; but I do not quite understand you Arabs yet."

Yussef gave honest O'Hara a covert smile of scorn, as he said,

"At all times difficult of access from the majesty and grandeur which surrounded him, the sultan was never more inaccessible than now; for he has immured himself in his Castle of Delights, where he basks in the smiles of a beautiful slave, whose charms have weaned him from all the cares of state, so that Rabd-al-Hoosi, the vizier, and the people, the slaves of his will, murmur among themselves, and urge that she should be slain to cure him of his passion."

"Is this woman so handsome?"

"She is said to be the most beautiful of several hundreds who adorn his seraglio."

"Several hundreds! what an unconscionable old Bluebeard!" said O'Flannigan. "I would give a month's pay to have the overhauling of that place."

"Achieve for us the extinction of these Abdali," said O'Hara; "secure the alliance of the Sultan of Sana, and you will have a fair claim to the everlasting gratitude of the British government—"

"Such as it is," muttered O'Flannigan, dubiously.

"And what is better—on the Horse Guards for promotion."

"But he may cut our heads off."

"Then we'll put up a fine monument to your memory somewhere; in Westminster, maybe."

"Bravo," said I; "I'll risk it—I am off!"

"I will seek Mohamed," said the merchant, "and if I do not return in the first hour after sunset with his letter, do not expect it—for I will return no more—a good evening—may God protect you all."

With one of his profound salutes, this interesting Arab withdrew; and while O'Hara, with Montague's aid, prepared a highflown epistle to his high mightiness the Imaum of Sana, Langley and I hurried to our quarters to select clothes, pack our portmanteaux, prepare our horses, our pistols, and a good store of ball-cartridges. I waited impatiently for the return of Yussef with the letter of protection from

the deadliest enemy of the British government; and I was not without fears that he would never procure it; for our projected mission, though a dangerous one, in the adventures which it promised us, had a singular charm for two such spirits as Langley and me.

At nightfall Yussef returned, with an ample letter of protection, signed and sealed by the emir. On being untied and unrolled (for Musselmans do not *fold* their letters), it ran somewhat thus:—

"BISMILLAH, &c., &c. In the name of the most Holy Prophet, We Mohamed, surnamed *Al Raschid*, Emir of all the Abdali, command the people of our tribe, and their friends the Futhalis of Aden, to abstain from plundering or molesting the persons, horses, or camels of the most excellent and esteemed nakibs, Hilton and Langley, who are proceeding on a mission to that divine Master of the Throne of Gold, the most admirable of Imaums, Solyman Sultan of Sana. Given at the request of our excellent friend Yussef of Mocha, and written on the last day of Ramadan, in the year of the Hegira, 1264.

"MOHAMED EMIR."

"Between this and Sana, the roads are most unsafe," said Yussef, after I had thanked him, "but this letter will sufficiently protect you from the Bedouins, who have lately been seen among the coffee mountains. On reaching the camp of the Sheikh Abdulmelik, his band, all brave and determined men, will be your escort to Sana. Are you going with your master?" he asked of Buff, who was oiling my pistols.

"No, sir; journeys and furloughs are not for poor fellows like me."

"Come with us," said the Arab, "and I will find you a bride from the desert, whose dowry will be a tent and a spear—a bosom of down and two bright eyes."

"I thank you, sir; but I could never keep a wife on my clearings, unless she washed for the company," said honest Buff, shaking his head, while I laughed at his practical reply to Yussef's poetical invitation.

By the recommendation of the latter, Langley and I provided a number of shawls, handsome pipes, and a drinking cup, as presents for Abdulmelik. We bade adieu to the mess overnight, with more than usual regret (for our mission was not destitute of great danger), and prepared to take the road betimes on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUR DEPARTURE.

Our merry drums and fifes were making the splintered crater and caverned rocks of Aden ring to the réveille, when we mounted two Arabian horses of Langley's choosing—fine animals, which, to the proverbial fleetness and symmetry of their race, added somewhat more

of the strength of the European breeds. Our cloaks, valises, with my double-barrelled percussions, and Fred's revolver, were strapped to the saddles. Our regimental waistbelts and swords were all that we retained of our own dress, for, by the advice of Yussef, we had procured from the bazaar full Arab suits, nearly alike; ample yellow cotton drawers, and vests of blue cloth laced with silver; red tarbooshes, surrounded by a roll of muslin, embroidered with gold, and wrought over with texts of the Koran, and over this was a sash, the long floating fringes of which were silk and gold.

The soldiers of our mainguard, who concluded that we had some frolic in hand, laughed on seeing us mounted and attired in this costume; but poor Buff looked very grave, and viewed our departure with no small anxiety, and tears glistened in his eyes, as he received the keys of my baggage.

"Good-bye, my lads," said O'Flannigan, who was captain of the mainguard; "and now, as you are going on your thravels, I'll give you the advice my father gave me, when I was turning my back on Ballinamara to join the Royal County Down; 'Never dthrink water, Pat, when you can get betther; and never kiss the maid, when you can kiss the misthress.'"

"Good-bye, Buff, I'll soon be back," said I.

"Faith, sir, I'm afraid we'll be getting you both back salted in a hamper, if you ever come back at all."

Yussef accompanied us, perched between the humps of a fine camel, which ambled easily along, as the rider had got rid of the mountain of coffee packages, with which he had entered Aden yesterday; and together we took the path through the Turkish wall.

Enjoying the pleasure of freedom from the trammels of duty and the dull routine of hard garrison life, with the excitement of anticipated adventures, mingled perhaps with dangers, we left the arid promontory and its Turkish towers behind, and turned our horses' heads towards the bright green hills of Yemen. Of Aden we were long since heartily sick, never having ventured far beyond the chain of heights that overlook the narrow isthmus; for, in consequence of the continual hostility waged against us by the Arabs, and their proneness to assassination, the general order, that no officer or soldier, on pain of disobedience, should go beyond two miles from camp or quarters, had been strictly enforced by O'Hara.

We had barely got clear of the Main Pass, before we were joined by a fourth traveller—a fat and well-fed, but dusky-looking personage, wearing an enormous white turban, and loose over-coat of thin cloth; he bestrode a stout donkey, which he whipped and spurred with great energy.

"By the camel of the Prophet, it is the false dog who keeps the caravanserai—the Parsee!" said Yussef, with a glance of anger. "Well, son of an unbelieving mother, art thou come to pay me those 4000 rupees?"

"No, sahib," said he, skilfully placing his donkey between Lang-

ley's horse and mine; "me am going to Sana, under de white officers' protection (if poor Parsee be allowed), to buy fruit and raisins."

"Art thou not afraid that I will kill thee in the desert or on the mountains?"

"Yes, Kojah Yussef, so me no trust you," replied the Parsee, grinning and spurring to keep up with us.

"Upon my word, sir," said I, now way pleased by this absurd addition to our party, "I think you had better return while your skin is whole, for after your treatment of my friend, I must decline—"

"No, no," said Langley, "let him come, by all means, we'll have some fun with him—come, get on in front, old fellow," he added, giving the donkey a lash with his whip, which made it scamper before us, and we laughed immoderately at the fat Parsee, whose body, perched far back upon the donkey, loomed from side to side, and seemed to have no other legs than those of the animal he rode.

"He may come," said Yussef, with a dark smile; "ere long Munkir and Nakir will demand from him an account of my rupees."

"Munkir and Nakir—who are they?"

"Two frightful spirits," he replied, lowering his voice, "who interrogate the corpses of the departed, which are forced to sit upright and answer them; and if they maintain when dead the lies they told when living, then they are beaten with iron mallets and gnawed by the teeth of ninety-nine dragons, each having seven heads, for such is the law of the Prophet."

"We poor Kafirs will find ourselves in a bad way when we come under their hands; they will be worse than our friends the Abdal."

"The souls of infidels, unhappy that they are!" replied Yussef, in the same grave tone, "are inclosed in a pit in the wilderness of Hadramaut—the adjacent province, where they must remain for ever—for so it was revealed at Medina."

We now passed the rocky defile, the scene of our recent conflict, of which not a vestige remained, save one or two dead horses, half devoured by vultures. From these, the flies came in black clouds as we passed them. We struck off by a path known to Yussef, and which he said, would bring us to the road leading directly from Mocha to Sana, and which, by being the most frequented, was the most safe. The morning air was pure and extremely pleasant, the unclouded sun was rising in our rear; the green hills were spreading before us; the dew lay heavy on the grass; on the beautiful foliage of the fig, melon, peach, and plum-tree, or the broader branches of the date-palm, for every mile we traversed, brought us into a richer country than—from my previous impression of sun-burned Aden—I could have believed Arabia to be; but Yemen is the finest and most fertile portion of that vast peninsula. It is the true Arabia Felix—the Land of Incense in the times of old; for though its coasts are barren sands, or rude volcanic rocks, its hills and valleys

teem with wealth, and are rich in all the foliage and all the fruit of the tropics, flourishing in a usually temperate atmosphere and under a genial sun.

Yussef was a most agreeable companion. He told us innumerable stories of valiant sheikhs and beautiful fairies, of genii, giants, and seven-headed monsters; but he treated the Parsee with an amount of scorn, which, to that personage, however, was not a matter of the smallest consequence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ABDALI!

AVOIDING all villages, where, as Yussef said, we ran a great risk of being robbed, stoned, or perhaps shot at, especially if the people were Futhalis, after passing through a long woody tract, we halted during the heat of noon in a beautiful valley or wadi, about twenty miles from Aden, in a plain where a little brook stole through the rich grass between two thickets of tall and sombre date-palms, gum, and wild coffee-trees, the slender branches of which were bending under their evergreen leaves, and shrouded by the statelier foliage of the fig and almond. Above the narrow vale, on a fragment of rock, were the ruins of an ancient building, which Yussef said, "was old as the days of King Ad," but which in later times had been the habitation of a giant of incredible stature, who had two great horns on his head, with the eyes of a horse and the tail of a cow; and who had been slain in combat by the enchanted sword of an Abdali emir, an ancestor of Mohamed, on the very ground where we were then halted.

Groves of varied green shrouded each end of the valley, and mountains mellowed in the sunny haze closed the landscape far beyond them. Antelopes were gliding and partridges whirring around us, and the fear of bringing more troublesome visitors, alone restrained us from trying a shot at them with Fred's revolver before lunching. We unbitted our horses, and in the Arabian fashion piquetted them to trees by the fetlock, and thanking our stars that we had got so far on our way without seeing any of those obnoxious Abdali, we gradually resigned ourselves to a short nap, while Yussef kindly offered to keep watch for the wandering Arabs, who, he said, "were such adroit thieves, that they would steal the beard off one's chin without being discovered."

We had not dozed for half an hour, when a sudden yell of terror from the fat Parsee awoke us, and mechanically we grasped our swords and pistols, which lay at hand.

"We are betrayed!" I exclaimed, on seeing that not less than five hundred Abdali horsemen were around us, all mounted on their

fleet and fiery horses, and clad in their white turbans and linen shirts, with their maces, lances, cimitars, and pistols bristling.

"Yussef—Kojah Yussef!" cried Langley.

"He has disappeared—the villain!" said I, drawing my sword.

"But you have his letter—the letter of the emir."

"These wretches could never read it."

"Then let us die game, Hilton—good bye—God bless you, Frank,—it is all up with us—we shall be hewed to pieces!"

But the Abdali sat motionless on their horses, with the bright points of their long reedy lances glittering in the sunshine, and seeing no attempt made to assail us, I drew from my breast-pocket the real or pretended letter of protection, to which the name of their emir was attached. A brilliantly accoutred Arab, mounted on a magnificent horse, came forward from the dense group, and though the redness of his beard had disappeared, under the turbaned helmet, with its bird of paradise plume, I recognised, in the face of the terrible emir, the mild features of Yussef, the coffee merchant, who had so often hobbled and nobbed with me at Aden over a cup of his Mocha, and a whiff from my hubble-bubble. He had now reappeared in his proper costume, with that love of *effect* which is peculiar to the Orientals. Having great doubts of the treatment we might experience, Fred and I stood somewhat on our guard as he approached, while the poor Parsee grovelled on the earth before him, burying his face and head among the long grass in token of abject humility. The emir smiled, as he said to me,

"You trusted to me, and protected me as poor Yussef, the coffee trader—I will not betray that trust as the Emir Mohamed."

"How can we be assured of that?" I asked. "Have you not deceived me and others under this assumed character of a dealer from Mocha?"

"Stratagems are fair in war," he answered, loftily, "and war has been made upon us by the unwelcome presence of your soldiers on the Cape of Aden. The Abdali have come from Ishmael, and the fertile plains as well as the deserts of Arabia are their inheritance, of which none but God can deprive them. The land belongs to the people. What right have the Faringis to demand a portion of it? The green hills of Yemen and the white rocks of Aden have been invaded many times, and there the crescent waned and shrank before Abrahah the Abyssinian, and the Persian dogs of Omar; but never have hostile bands found a path through the wilds of Nejed or the barren sands of Hejaz. No; Allah Ackbar! It is the proudest boast of Ishmael's outcast children that they have never been conquered! Sheathe your sword, and desire the young nakib, your friend, to do so likewise. He, too, is my friend, for he believed in the word of poor Yussef. I have sworn to exterminate the Faringis; but I have eaten bread and salt in your tents, and have not forgotten the day when I vowed by Him who withered up the once green wood, never to forget my

friend! But as for thee, thou infamous Parsee—thou very Jew,—thou child of Sarah! what is the punishment a cowardly robber merits?"

The Parsee grovelled lower yet, if possible, on the earth; but the emir brushed him across the head with the ostrich feathers which adorned his lance, and then gave him a prick with its sharp steel point, saying,

"Stand up, oh wretch! and listen to me. For every rupee I lent thee—but for no other end than to gain a footing among the simple Faringis as Yussef, the red-bearded merchant—I can bring into the field a fleet horse and a well-armed man. Thinking me a poor Arab among the Faringis—a foe among many foes—thou didst cheat, and accuse me of lying."

A hollow groan escaped the poor Parsee, who was drenched in perspiration, as he lay prostrate before the terrible emir.

"Parsee, look up," said the Arab; "I said, that when Azrael, the angel of death, spread his cold wings over thee, he would hold before thy greedy eyes the blank receipt of Yussef;" and, forcing the groveller to look up, he held before his sky-blue visage and rolling eyes the strip of paper, from which the prepared ink had, as he intended, faded away; and a half stifled cry for mercy left the tongue of the poor hotel-keeper.

"Jaffer! how should we punish this son of Eblis?"

"Strip, and bind him hand and foot, and leave him in a date thicket, so that the vultures and hyænas may eat him without trouble or resistance."

"What sayest thou, Kior Ibn Kogia?"

"Hang him up by the shoulder-blades on a couple of iron hooks, and jerk him over the wall of Jebel Ahmer," suggested this amiable personage, who wore a species of Bedouin keffie or yellow head-dress, the lower part of which concealed all his face but the eyes.

"Bend down a couple of young pines, and bind a heel to each," said old Jaffer, who gave me, from time to time, a grim and malicious smile, "then let the saplings spring erect with all their strength."

"Make him give a new receipt, and then bore out his eyes with a hot iron," suggested a third.

"Upon my honour, we have got into pleasant company," said Fred, scanning the speakers with his eye-glass, while the Parsee, between each of their propositions, uttered a most mournful groan.

"I will do none of these things," said the emir, who saw, of course, the strong repugnance expressed in our faces.

"Then whip off his head by one stroke," said Jaffer, towards whom I could not resist making one forward stride, on seeing him unsheathe the jambea which had already slain so many of our men.

"No," said the emir, "hear the sentence of Mohamed! Cut off—"

"His head?" cried a dozen, as they drew their thirsty weapons.

"No—his beard; let him be painted red, and led through the streets of Lahadj."

Jaffer, Kior Ibn Kogia, and several others sprung out of their high saddles, and in a few seconds the almost inanimate Parsee had his beard rent from his chin, and his body stripped nude as when he came into the world. A jar of red dye was then brought, and he was smeared over with it from head to heel. His tormentors then placed him upon his donkey with his face to the tail, and below its belly his ankles were tied with his own turban; but the crowning disgrace was the loss of his beard—the deepest dishonour an Oriental, especially an Arab, can suffer; for they deem it so sacred, that the hairs which are detached by combing it are carefully collected and buried in the earth. Disfigured thus, with all the Arab horsemen spurring, prancing, laughing, and jesting around him, he was led off towards Lahadj, which was close by, at the foot of the valley; and Langley and I found ourselves compelled to mount and follow.

Crossing the Meidam, a river of Yemen, which, after traversing a hundred miles, pours its waters into the Indian Ocean far west of Aden—we entered upon a fertile and well-cultivated plain, and, on the right bank of the river, beheld the white walls and flat-roofed habitations of Lahadj, contrasting so pleasantly with that emerald verdure, to which, in Aden, we had so long been strangers. They were tinted by the warm glow of the sun, the rays of which glittered on the bright matchlock barrels and lanceheads of the armed guards who watched the old Turkish walls of the town, the embattled gate of which they closed at the approach of the Abdali; for Lahadj is the seat of a petty sultan of its own.

On seeing this demonstration the emir halted, and sent forward Kior Ibn Kogia, who led the bridle of the ass on which was tied the wo-begone Parsee, whom the guards of Lahadj received with shrill cries of delight. He was thrust through the gates; and as we rode off towards the mountains, we heard the shouts and bursts of laughter which greeted his appearance in the streets and bazaars of the little city.

"Frank," said Langley, "I do not half like the aspect of this adventure; do me the favour to ask your friend in the iron jacket where he is taking us to—whether we are prisoners, and be sure to adopt your most dulcet Arabic."

I put the queries to Mohamed, and heard his answer with anxiety.

"Nothing astonishes me more," said he, "than the credulity of you Faringis, and your ignorance of the land of Yemen and its people. None would have respected my letter save the Abdali and the old Shiekh Abdulmelik; thus, long before you could have reached his village, it would have been spat upon, torn to shreds, and trampled under foot by the Futhalis, the men of Lahadj, or other wanderers, who are always prowling for travellers approaching Mocha. You are not my prisoners, but, at present, are my guests. Hear me," he continued, adopting that Oriental style which would have been so

pleasant to listen to, but for the doubt that hovered in my mind; "when the Good Maker of heaven and earth gave to the children of Sarah the riches of Judea, and to those of Hagar the desert, to the latter He added four precious gifts; a turban in lieu of a crown, a tent in lieu of a castle, swords in lieu of walls, and songs instead of those laws which make men slaves. Hence the free green mountains of Yemen, or the Yellow desert, whose waves of sand spread far away towards the Persian Gulf, are to us a thousand times dearer than the white walled cities and the spicy regions of the south. Yet have I a castle among the hills—the towers of Jebel Ahmer—of which even the sultan of Sana might be proud, and there, for this night, you shall both tarry with me."

Descending from the hills, we entered upon a broad flat valley, at the extremity of which rose a mass of pillared basalt. The sky was without a cloud; and though the sun had long since sunk below the horizon, the orange blaze of its setting yet spread over all the west, where one bright star was twinkling. At the foot of the sombre rocks that overhung this flat and fertile valley, a few groups of lonely palm trees drooped over the little runnels that were glittering in the light of the west; near these were browsing a few long-bearded goats. The dew was falling fast on rock and valley, and, as it fell, a sweet fragrance rose from the aromatic flowers that grew in this desert place, and mingled with the rich perfume of the orange and citron groves. As we rode on, a portion of what appeared to be basaltic rocks gradually assumed the appearance of a castle, having strong round towers of antique form, with curtain walls between; these became more and more defined, and as we crossed the valley, a clear bright light, which, when viewed from the darkened hollow below, seemed like a splendid star in the sky, was burned upon the summit of the loftiest tower.

By this time the horsemen were all singing a wild but lively air, while one beat on an Arab drum; and nothing could be more pleasing, or more like a scene in a drama or novel, than the picturesque aspect of the scenery and the troop,—the darkened valley with its solemn palm trees, the darker castle on its lofty rock; the last flash of the day that had gone; the group of horsemen in their flowing eastern costume, with their regular features, their dark, expressive eyes, so full of fire and animation, and their bushy eyebrows, denoting keen intelligence; their beautiful horses, and tall slender spears adorned with tassels and feathers; their wild but harmonious chant—and, chief of all, the gallant young emir, whose shining shirt of mail, round shield, and floating dress, brought back to our memory the stories we had read of the Alhambra, and of the chivalry and glory of that brave Arab race, whose valour spread the terror of their name through Egypt, France, and Spain, through India, Persia, and Greece.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BATTLE OF JEBEL AHMER, OR THE RED MOUNTAIN.

EMIR, which in Syria and Turkey is similar to the Ameer of the people of Scinde, is a vague appellation given equally to the commander of five hundred horse, and to him who may lead ten times that number; throughout Arabia, where a form of government something like that patriarchal system which so long existed in the north of Scotland still remains, they are sometimes styled sheeriffs, but the petty chiefs of the Abdali retained the more ancient oriental term for their superior. In Yemen every district has its governor, who is termed a Dola, if of royal blood; an Emir, if not. Each city has its Kadi, and each village of houses or tents, its Sheikh.

Like a pure Arab of noble lineage, the young Emir Mohamed was about the middle height; though very swarthy, he had fine and regular features, through which a ruddy glow appeared at times. His hair was thick and of the deepest black; his nose aquiline, and his forehead prominent, with eyebrows almost meeting; his mouth was handsome, his teeth white as pearls; his beard and moustaches dark as coal, though I had generally seen them dyed red, as a disguise—a tint sometimes adopted by the Arabs as a charm against magic. He had a quick ear, a sonorous voice, and a smile that was very captivating.

Though it is not the usual custom for Arabian sheikhs and emirs to dress themselves more richly than their followers, his shirt of mail was of exquisite workmanship, and resembled those of the Mahratta horsemen; the steel casque around which his turban was twisted, was inlaid with Damascene work, while the velvet sheath of his sword (which was straight and three feet long) was covered with the richest carving in silver. The blade was Persian; it rang like a silver bell, and had a verse of the Koran upon it, in letters of gold; his buckler hung on the hilt, and on his right side dangled a gorgeous poniard. Even the workmanship of his sandals was minute, and they were covered with little studs of gold.

He frequently drew my attention to his horse, of which he was very fond and proud. It had a small head, with tapering ears and large eyes full of fire; wide nostrils and an arched neck; muscular legs and short pasterns; high round flanks and small hoofs; docile and without vice, it was a part of the household, and ate from the white hand of Mohamed's favourite mistress. He knew its genealogy as well as his own for four hundred years, and assured me that it contained "all the noble qualities of the eastern horse, of Persia the warlike, Hejaz the handsome, Yemen the strong, and Nejed the noble, Syria the rich-skinned, Egypt the fleet, and Mesopotamia the docile." It was a perfect horse!

As we rode up to the winding path which led to his castle gate,

and along which our Arabian horses glided with the ease and security of goats, all seemed to me a dream. I could scarcely believe that I was riding beside that bloodthirsty emir, who had waged so barbarous a war with our people, and who was accused of so wickedly slaying so many of our poor seamen, whose ships had been captured by the armed boats of those Abdali who lived upon the coast, and trade with Africa. So strong was this sentiment that I could not refrain making some remark indicative of what passed in my mind, at which he laughed with very good humour.

"Rumour says that you are forming an extensive and ramified league against us," said I, "uniting even the Pacha of Egypt and the Schah of Persia in it."

"Rumour greatly overrates the aims and the influence of the poor Emir of the Abdali," said he; "yet I would that it were as you say. I committed a great error in attacking you the other night, nor did I mean to do so until other sheikhs had joined me; but I was blinded by anger against those villanous Peons, and assailed Aden unaided by a single ally."

"Nothing surprised me more than your sparing the life of the nakib of our artillery."

"I presume that you Franks think our Arab a mere destroyer—incapable of generosity or mercy? The nakib fought well—he was defenceless and weaponless; thus, I could not slay him with honour, and send his hapless soul to the pit of the Kafirs—the dark well of Borhût, in Hadramaut; yet I have sworn to have his head for his abuse of the Abdali, and I never swore in vain; but here is the house of strength my father left me."

The gate of this Arabian fortress was open, and on a platform before it stood six pieces of iron ordnance, three on each side, skillfully placed so as to sweep the steep and winding approach; and they had a very suspicious resemblance to British ship cannon. The castle consisted of several broad and strongly built towers, alternately round and square, connected by a dilapidated curtain wall. These formed a zone round the summit of the rock, and were of considerable antiquity, having been built by the Turks soon after they stormed Aden in 1538; though I afterwards heard a story related which assigned them a more fanciful origin than the wars of the Arabs and the bold Timariots of the Sultan Selim. The doors and deep-mouthed windows were all spanned by elegant arches, pointed like those in old Moorish mosques, and ornamented by zigzag fretwork in the Saracenic style of decoration. Between two of the towers there projected a gallery, which was enclosed by a screen of woodwork, and within this we heard a patter of slippers, and the sound of several female voices laughing and talking; for the ladies of the emir's household were rejoicing as they saw his train sweeping through the wide quadrangle of the stronghold, which had been won by one of his ancestors, who joined the king of Mocha—a descendant of the Prophet—in his revolt against the Osmanlies.

The Turkish portion of the fortress exhibited considerable remains of taste and magnificence; but the more modern additions, built by the Jew and Arab tradesmen from Mocha, were rude and uncouth, having dark, narrow and crooked passages, awkward stairs and massive doors, with floors and roofs of hard and white chunam.

My mind was filled with stories of the Moors of Granada, and recollections of the delightful "Thousand and One Nights," as we halted in the quadrangle; nor was it until I heard the heavy and clumsy gates of this Arab stronghold closed and barred, that any suspicion of the emir's intentions, or any anxiety as to the future, occurred to me. As for honest Fred Langley, he had no thoughts on the matter, but was quietly smoking a cigar, and seemed wholly intent on examining, with all the critical acuteness of an English jockey, the different points of the Arab horses, so far as he could see them, by the clear starlight of the evening.

The emir resigned his beautiful horse to his followers, some of whom were quartered in the various desolate-looking towers of the fort; but by far the greater number occupied black tents and huts of reeds and date-palms, turf and rock, near the pathway which led to the gate. Through several crooked passages in the body of the edifice we were led by an Abyssinian female slave, who bore a lamp, and wore a long dress of scarlet cotton, a linen veil, rings of latten on her fingers, and glass bracelets on her bare and shining arms, till we reached a kind of hall, where the taste of the Turks had achieved for their Beglerbeg what the simpler Yemenees could never have done for themselves. This hall had many slender pillars which upheld its painted roof, and the capitals of these were adorned by stones of blue alabaster, the bright spars, the onyxes and coarse emeralds, which are found in the neighbouring rocks.

A number of perfumed lamps were now lighted by some pretty Abyssinian slaves, all remarkable for their graceful figures and delicate features; and soft carpets were spread, and pipes and coffee prepared for us; for though our host, the emir, was a devout Mussulman, who never omitted, if possible, to turn his face towards Mecca five times in the twenty-four hours, to offer up his orisons at sunset, midnight, and other times set apart for prayer, he was not, like some I have met, so strict as to forbid even the use of coffee. A cool and delicious bath in the heart of the rocks refreshed us after our long and toilsome ride.

Though all the men in the place usually messed together, by the emir's desire, on this night only Kior Ibn Kogia, and that atrocious old rogue, Jaffer, joined us. For the ladies of his house a repast was laid in another apartment, separated from the hall by a grating of thick brass wire, through which we could see their black eyes glistening as they scrutinized us, and heard their lively and harmonious voices, and their exclamations of astonishment at all we said and did—for the arrival of two real live Franks was indeed a start-

ling incident in the monotony of their everyday lives—for an occasional fight with the Futhalis was a mere trifle.

We unbuckled our swords, lighted our pipes, and sat in a circle, with a supper of stewed mutton cut into small pieces, a bowl of rice, bread and cheese spread before us. Those who had knives prepared them; forks we had none, save those of Father Adam; and at the words of Mohamed, "Bismillah, begin!" we all being hungry as kites, dived our hands into the platters, and fished up whatever we could get. It was not without great repugnance that I dipped my fingers into the same mess with Jaffer—a fellow who had been my own servant, and whom I knew to be an assassin.

Supper over, the Abyssinian slaves brought ewers and sponges of rose-water, with which they bathed our hands and faces, and plentifully besprinkled the obstinate beards of the emir and his two companions. Then they placed two brass tripods near us; threw a lighted match into each; smoke ascended, and the hall became perfumed by the odour of the wood of aloes. We drank sherbet, which, to the evident discomposure of our companions, Fred tempered with a dash of brandy from his hunting-flask, for we had each one at our waist-belts.

"Humbug!" said he to me, in a low voice; "the idea of these fellows, who would cut our throats without the smallest scruple, turning up the whites of their eyes at a nip of brandy. Harkee, Jaffer, will you have some, old boy?"

But Jaffer shook his head with strong disgust.

There was but little conversation, for the emir was thoughtful, and we were weary. Jaffer and Kior, his followers, were fierce sons of the neighbouring wilderness, who had long lived there by the fruit of their spears—by violence and plunder; slaying alike the timid merchants of Mocha, the ferocious Wahabees, and the worn-out pilgrims, whose city of refuge was Mecca; sparing none whom they found in the desert. Their powers of conversation were somewhat limited, consequently, after smoking for a time, and after the opium in their pipes had given to their dark and closing eyes a wild and smoky glare, they gradually fell asleep; and the emir was nearly in the same dozing condition.

Langley looked at his watch, saying,

"Pleasant company, this! nine o'clock; how our fellows will be enjoying themselves at the mess about this very time; Popkins will be giving his first song, and O'Flannigan the invariable story about his uncle's horses; and here you and I are hobnobbing in the land of the Philistines. Do these brass doors open? I think I'll join the ladies."

"Don't think of it, pray," said I.

"Why did not our friend in the chain jacket bring them in to supper?"

"I assure you, it is as much as the soles of their feet are worth

to be seen by a man without the emir's permission, and more than a man's life is worth to look upon them."

"What stuff! why now, if we were at home, with a piano, and all those fine girls—I suppose they are fine ones (of course they are!)—we should finish off to-night with a galop or deux-temps. He is a regular buck, this Mohamed! Only think, Frank; that fellow Jaffer, who has a head like a cigar-shop sign, but who has picked up some English at Aden—"

"The scoundrel!—"

"Told me that he had ten beautiful women under lock and key, and that the large tower, near which we enter, is the seraglio—"

"Harem, Fred—only sultans have seraglios."

"Well, well; harem or seraglio, it comes to the same thing in the end. They are guarded by six Darfur eunuchs, ferocious fellows whom Mohamed bought so far off as Muskat, at the great slave market, where those pretty Abyssinians are sold. How graceful these girls are! 'Pon my honour, I should not care about investing a few pounds in that way myself. I would give a handful of rupees to have one peep through that grating? Do you think these fellows are asleep?"

"I trust you will do no such thing," said I, grasping his arm; "our lives might pay for it."

"And then we should lose our promotion; but just for something to tell at mess."

"Well, tell that you spent the evening among them, and danced with them all—for none but simple Popkins will believe you; but hark; how merrily they laugh!"

"One much louder than the rest—his sister, probably."

"Has he a sister?" said I.

"So Jaffer told me."

"What a communicative old Thug he must be! Well, judging from the brother, I should like very much to see her."

"We shall be introduced of course," said Fred, again diluting his sherbet with brandy.

"Introduced! well, Fred, you *have* the most original ideas of these Orientals!"

"I was once among them as far as the Dardanelles. We had a fine run in De Lancy's yacht, from Cowes; rather expensive though."

Beds of carpets and cushions being prepared for us, by two of the prettiest of the Abyssinian girls, when the time came for retiring, we were led away by them, and on committing our heads to the pillow, had no reason in any way to complain of our treatment, on this night, the first we had passed, in the chief stronghold of the bloodthirsty Abdali.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AMINA.

SOMEWHAT monotonously and listlessly two days slipped away at this castle of Jebel Ahmer, or the Red Mountain, so named from the colour of its rocks. In hospitality none could exceed the Emir Mohamed, whose character, during this half-compulsory visit, exhibited the true traits of the noble Arab, who, when war is over, is ever the friend of those confiding in him; and whose word, when once pledged, is irrevocable as fate. He never referred to the war maintained against us at Aden, lest it might lead to unpleasant subjects, but spoke regretfully of its departed glory, and told, that in the days of his father, Ferradeen, Aden, under its own sultan, had been a place of wealth and splendour, as the ruins of its spacious baths still testify. Then they were lined with marble and jasper, adorned with lofty pillars and galleries, and surmounted by a gilded dome. Now they are but a heap of stones.

On the strength of our former acquaintance, Jaffer, who seemed a man of some importance in his tribe, made many advances to me; but I felt only repugnance and abhorrence for him, and my mind always went back to that morning when I found my poor sentry lying murdered on his post, with his head a yard from his body.

Langley spent some hours of each morning in shooting at the plovers and partridges which whirled about the thorny mimosa trees, or at the hyenas that lurked among the brushwood under the castle wall. I employed myself with the emir in throwing the lance at a target while riding at full gallop on the sward inclosed by the ramparts; I also made some little sketches of the fortress on the blank leaves of my pocket-book. These Mohamed begged permission to show to his wives and sister, who occupied the tallest and most grim of the Turkish towers, and all the windows of which, most provokingly, opened to the valley without. My small artistic efforts were received with cries of delight and astonishment by the imprisoned fair ones, whose anxiety to obtain an interview with the Frankish visitor was greatly increased, and their clamours became so high, that the gallant emir resolved to gratify their whim; for the Arabs do not subject their women to the same restraint inflicted on them by other Orientals; indeed, many of the tribes permit them to go unveiled, to appear before strangers, and to bathe in the rivers without garments or guards. Lieut. Welsted, I think, mentions an instance of the latter having come under his own observation.

The emir, after giving Kior Ibn Kogia a hint to find some object of interest among the horses for Fred Langley, of whom he felt somewhat dubious, having caught him winking with a remarkably knowing expression at some of the Abyssinian girls, and laughing with Kior himself, who passed for a *roué* among the Abdali, he led

me through several long passages which were floored and ceiled with chunam, to the large tower of the harem, at the double doors of which were two repulsive looking black eunuchs on guard, each resembling the darkest of all bronze figures, with his ample red turban on his head, a cloth swathed round his body, sandals on his feet, and a crooked jambea in his girdle. Here, just as we passed the second door, which was inscribed by a peculiar verse from the Koran, Fred (who had suspected something of our mission) hurriedly joined us, and, somewhat to the emir's annoyance, passed his arm through mine, and entered also.

We traversed a beautiful apartment, the walls of which were covered with those ornaments of network and mosaic which so frequently decorate the mosques and palaces of the East, but in which no figures of any kind are introduced, save those of plants, flowers, and foliage. This *arabesque* work was pale and faded now, for it was doubtless the production of some artist who had come hither under the protection of the old Turkish Beglerbegs. Low cushions, vases, and flowers were the only furniture; and a few slaves, who were in attendance upon the ladies, loitered about, or sat sewing in corners. Between the festoons of a curtain we saw their mistresses, sitting in a group, in an apartment beyond, where they were laughing and talking, for they seemed always happy and gay.

From the tower of the harem there projected over the precipitous red rocks, an elaborately carved balcony, the roof of which was supported by eight slender arches of woodwork, so fine as to resemble interlaced willow wands; four of these were closed by sashes glazed with a thin transparent stone, which is found in the mountain quarries of Sana; the others were open, and here in the warm evening the sister of the emir and the ladies of the household (among whom were three of his wives) sat on soft cushions, embroidering, chatting, and fanning each other with large feather fans, unseen by all, and enjoying the prospect of the glorious valley that stretched afar off between rocks and mountains, dotted with dark palms and shady walnut trees, until its perspective became mellowed and lost in that hot and sunny haze; but in that ample valley seldom a living creature was seen, save some poor haji visiting afoot the little domed tomb of the Emir Ferradeen, a wandering Bedouin on his camel, or a wild Futhali on his fleet barb, with his lance of reed, sixteen feet long, flashing in the sun, and his loose, uncombed locks streaming in the wind, as he rushed across the plain, intent on outrage and rapine; for more than all the descendants of Yarab and Ishmael, have the Futhalis had their hands uplifted against mankind.

On our entrance, the quick white hands so instantaneously dropped the thick veils over their faces that nothing was visible of the ladies but their bright black eyes, to which their corpse-like head-dress lent an unnatural lustre. Their voices and laughter became hushed, and their occupations suspended, as we entered, and seated ourselves

unbidden. Four, who sat round a little tripod stool, playing a game with pretty Persian cards, immediately covered up their hands in their flowing dresses. Other two were playing with a graceful little gazelle; their arms were bare, and, from all I could see, I should not have supposed that any one of them was, as Fred whispered, a degree darker than a pretty Parisian brunette; but two of the female slaves who attended them, had tattooed hands and faces, so dyed with henna, as to be beyond description frightful.

By their richness of dress and their perfumes, the three wives were easily distinguished from the mere slaves. In their forms, in their air, and in the very indolence with which the Odalisques reclined among their soft cushions there was something classical and beautiful, though every part of their figures was shrouded by their veils, flowing vests, and short skirts of bright coloured Indian silk, and by their large striped trousers, which reached to their ankles, and were embroidered with silver fringes. All wore Indian bangles or bracelets, necklaces, and anklets of ductile gold.

Their bright eyes were fixed on us in silent wonder: and by their whispers, I could perceive that they were disappointed to find the two Faringis attired like—two very respectable Mahometans, and not, as their imagination had hitherto conceived, in some barbarous and unheard-of costume.

I had warned Langley to be reserved, so, with a low bow, we seated ourselves in silence beside the emir, who addressed something of kindness or compliment to all, but chiefly to the slightest of the shrouded fair ones, whom we ascertained to be his sister Amina.

"In Frangistan," said he, "I have been told by merchants I have met at Mocha, that you teach your women all things; more than the men of our deserts or mountains can dream of. Amina has only two accomplishments—story-telling and embroidery; with the first she will be able to entertain her husband, when she is bestowed upon him; by the second, she will decorate her children, if the Prophet bestows them upon her; and what more does an Arab maid require, except the arts of grinding corn and making bread?"

I looked with much interest at Amina. She was evidently of an age which, in our northern clime, would have made her but a girl; but, like the full-grown fruits of her native land, she had ripened under the hot vertical sun of the tropics. She was a child of nature, and the proportions of her half-hidden form seemed as beautiful as her actions were graceful. The wives of her brother were full, voluptuous, and indolent-like women; but it was difficult to say which among the group of veiled ladies had the brightest, the blackest, the softest, or most Oriental eyes, as they all beamed alike through the embroidered holes in the top of their veils.

"I brought the Franks here to amuse you Amina, Zeinab, and the others, so it is but fair that you should tell us a story to amuse them. The Arab has no written books," he added, turning to me,

"but the Prophet gave him stories to tell and songs to sing; and there is no man among the Abdali who can tell a tale like the daughter of Ferradeen."

"What shall it be?" asked the gentlest of voices, under the muslin veil, while two soft black eyes turned inquiringly from Langley to me, and from me to her brother.

"Tell us about the destruction of King Ad," said Zeinab, the emir's first wife.

"No, no," said two ladies together, "we have heard that before—so often, too."

"The Fountain of Life that flowed in the Land of Darkness," suggested the emir, as a slave lighted his long hubble-bubble.

"It is so short," said the sweet voice again; "you are determined not to be wearied by me. Will my voice tire you?"

"Your voice will never tire us," said Fred, being the first sentence he had ever put together in Arabic, and for which I contrived to give him an admonitory poke in the ribs.

"Tell us of the geni who haunted the Red Mountain in the times of old," said Zeinab.

"Yes, yes," cried they all, clapping their hands; "the Geni and the Daughter of the Sheikh al Jebel Ahmer." And after bending her beautiful eyes on the rich carpet for a few moments, Amina, in her soft, harmonious Arabic, told us the following story; and I give it in her own words, as nearly as I can remember them.

CHAPTER XXX.

STORY OF THE SHEIKH'S DAUGHTER WHO MARRIED A GENI.

"ONCE upon a time, long before the Turks anchored their galleys at Aden, or displayed their banners in Yemen, there was a sheikh of Johasmi named Zama, who dwelt in this castle of Jebel Ahmer, for it was a fortress of the Arabs before the kings of Egypt came through the Gate of Tears, having been built by the pagan sons of Ishmael; and they buried alive, under each of its towers, two of the youngest virgins of the sixty tribes which are descended from Yarab, the son of Kahtan, the founder of Yemen.

"In the days of the old Sheikh Zama, Jebel Ahmer had thirty towers; now it hath but ten.

"Though the sheikh had many wives, he had only one child, a daughter, who was named Zarela, and sometimes Gazella, her eyes being large, soft, and lustrous as those of the gazelle. In beauty she surpassed the maids of many tribes, for they could not produce a virgin to vie with Zarela. Her teeth were as two rows of little pearls; her eyebrows were as two black slender arches, and so fine that they required no touch of kohel; her breath was sweet as the incense of Sheba; she was called the *Fifth* perfect woman; and

many a brave warrior's soul became a captive in the net of her glossy nair; but the chief of these were the Sheikh Ali Mustapha of Dhafar, who was dying for her sake, and the Emir Osman of the Abdali, who loved her with all his heart, and was so wasted by pining, that he was scarcely the shadow of a man.

"The venerable Zama doted on his daughter, and never tired of gazing on her, for she was so beautiful; and by her desire he refused all the bribes of her lovers; flocks of fat-tailed sheep and goats: droves of camels and beautiful horses; gilded tents, tufted spears, sharp cimatars, gold and jewels, for none of the young sheikhs would Zarela marry, saying that she wished to end her days in her father's towers, on the Jebel Ahmer; but the truth was, that her soul was intoxicated with the incense of praise, and she thought that in all the sixty tribes of Yarab, there was not an emir who was worthy to tie the latches of her sandals.

"Yet she had a heart that was not without susceptibility, for in her lonely thoughts and secret heart, she longed for something that was more beautiful and more perfect than it has pleased Heaven to create in the form of man.

"She had also, unknown to all, an invisible lover, who heard all her wishes, and divined all those secret longings; for every wish was gratified the moment she conceived it. If she wanted a rose from the distant brooks of the valley, it lay in her lap; if she wished for the flowers of midsummer, even in winter, they clambered, without fading, among the red rocks of Jebel Ahmer; if she longed for richer dresses than her father's wealth, or his people's valour, could procure, lo! the bright silks of Angora, the soft shawls of Cashmere, the yellow beads of Bokhara, the snow-white pearls of Oman, the sparkling diamonds of Ormuz, the sweet incense of Hadramaut, the golden slippers of the west, the silver muslins of the east, and the richest jewels of Persia, lay around her; and thus every thought was anticipated and every wish fulfilled.

"Then Zarela knew that she had a geni for a lover; and while her heart trembled with mingled terror and pleasure, she implored him to come before her. The words had scarcely left her lips when there appeared, at the edge of the bright carpet on which she sat, a man, or rather, a youth, who in bloom and beauty, in stature and raiment, surpassed all the men she had ever seen, and to whom the handsome Emir Osman and the Sheikh Mustapha were as dusky Nubians when compared to an Arab of the Arabs. Then the bright geni told how he loved and how he worshipped her, and begged only her gratitude for his favours, with her fidelity in time to come, but more than all, he prayed her to be secret and sincere. Full of gratitude for the magnificent presents he had heaped upon her, proudly anticipating that she would now command all that every quarter of the world contained, and dazzled by the wondrous beauty, the soft voice, and winning manner of the awful spirit, she fatally consented to love and obey him in all things; to yield herself up to him in body and in

soul; to be his, and his only! never to hear the words of love from other lips, and never to love another.

"Now it may be necessary to tell these Franks something of the nature of the genii, that they may know why the faithful believe in them.

"They inhabited the world ages before Adam was created, and were governed by princes who bore the name of Suleiman; and this spirit told Zarela, that on being driven by Eblis into remote parts of the earth, these genii, after a long war with Tamurath, king of Persia, were now inhabiting the barren mountains of Kaf, but that a time was coming when men would be destroyed, and all the world would be again their own.

"We are told, moreover, by the blessed Koran, that there is created an intermediate order of beings who are partly angels and partly demons. There are genii who are created of fire, and are of a grosser fabric than the angels, for they eat, drink, marry and have little genii; and for *their* conversion, as well as the saving of mankind, the Holy Prophet came among us; for they heard him read the Koran by night in the valley of Alnakla; and we are told in the Merciful chapter which was revealed at Mecca, that on the last terrible day, when heaven shall be rent asunder and the sky become red as a rose; and when the earth shall melt beneath our feet, that both men and genii shall be judged according to their works; that the bad genii shall be taken by their feet and forelocks, and flung headlong into hell; but that the good shall have shady gardens to inhabit, and shall repose upon couches, the linings whereof shall be of silk interwoven with the finest gold; and therein shall be agreeable and beautiful damsels, having fine black eyes, all kept in pavilions secluded from the public view; and therein shall they lie on green cushions and soft carpets, rich with intoxicating perfumes.*

"Now the spirit who loved the beautiful Zarela, and to whom she had vowed her fidelity and love, was the king of those wicked genii, who had scoffed at the voice of the Prophet, when he was on his retreat to Altayif, and read the Koran in the night; he was the demon who tempted Solyman Ibn Daood, and buried scrolls of magic under his throne, that they might be found there, and so defame him; and though his eyes were usually bright and beautiful, Zarela observed, that when she spoke of men or of aught that was holy, they assumed a fiendish glare which terrified her; for the geni knew that he was doomed, and could never pass the bridge of Al Sirat, so in time she learned to avoid speaking of such things; her mind became full of evil; and there, in her tower of Jebel Ahmer, she passed her time with the spirit, amid such delights, splendour, and happiness as no mortal should share out of paradise, and she rarely left the apartment which was assigned her by the good old sheikh, to whose eyes the gorgeous presents of the geni remained invisible even to the minutest thread.

* See Koran, chapter lv.

"At last the Sheikh Zama began to weary of his daughter's obstinacy in refusing the bravest young men of the tribes, and commanded her to choose between the Emir Osman and the Sheikh Mustapha, for he was very desirous of seeing her sons at the head of his people, but she resolutely refused, and in great perplexity he sought the advice of a learned dervish who dwelt in yonder valley, 'for,' said he, 'her obstinacy in the matter of marriage is altogether strange, and was never heard of among all the women of the sixty tribes; they usually begin to look for husbands through the holes in their veils as soon as they pass their tenth year.'

"She is perhaps enchanted by a wicked magician,' suggested the dervish, 'or influenced by certain spirits of the air.'

"Dost thou think so?" asked the sheikh, every hair of whose beard trembled with terror.

"Alas, have we not heard of such things?" replied the other.

"But how shall I know this, O dervish?" asked Zama, unsheathing his cimitar in the impulse of anger, for he loved his daughter even as his own soul.

"Anoint thine eyes with this ointment, which dropped from the golden spout of the Kaaba," replied the dervish; 'and if there are spirits about her, thou shalt see them plainly as I now see thee.'

"The aged sheikh thanked the dervish and gave him a camel which was as white as a new-laid egg, and after praying long with his face towards Mecca, and after fasting and bathing himself many times, he touched his eyes with the holy ointment, and lo! he saw all things with a wonderful distinctness; the most distant parts of yonder far-stretching valley seemed close at hand; he could see every fibre and leaf of the palms that grew at the horizon, the insects that crawled thereon, and the spider that spun under the shade of the creeping vines. He could discern a thousand wonderful animals, even the little drops of dew that distilled from the way-side flowers, and the smallest blade of grass appeared to have as many fibres as the thorny mimosa.

"He went straight to the tower where his daughter dwelt, and leaving his slippers at the door, that he might tread with greater softness, ascended unheard to her chamber, on entering which, he could no longer recognise it, for the plain woollen stuffs of her own and her mother's spinning had disappeared, and in their place were gorgeous hangings of silk and gold, Persian carpets such as the wives of the Prophet might have envied,—for these had been collected by the geni from the uttermost points of the earth for their king's palace, which lay in the mountains of Kaf. But what were the emotions of the aged sheikh, when he saw his beautiful daughter asleep, and locked in the embraces of a wicked geni, who, instead of the angelic form in which he appeared to her, bore his real aspect—for the miraculous ointment of the Kaaba made all plain to Zama, and it was more hideous than one of the tribes of Ad—more frightful than the form of Eblis after the fall.

"With his sharp cimitar Zama made a blow, which would have slain them both, but the wakeful demon caught the descending blade in his long bony claws, snatched it from the hand of the sheikh, and vanished into the air with a cry which rent the solid walls of the tower, though to the ears of Zarela it seemed but as a soft and whispered adieu.

"The mind of the poor sheikh was distracted by grief and terror; but he kept all this secret, and wept while he tied round his deluded daughter's neck a precious stone which had been in the hilt of the Prophet's sword, when he cleft the moon in twain, and gave a symbol to the faithful, by placing her in two halves in the darkened sky at noon. This stone had been dipped in the Fountain of Life, and on it were inscribed certain words from the holy Koran. This was to protect her from the touch of the geni; then he anointed her eyes that she might see him in all his native deformity when again he approached her; and when he did so, how great was her horror—how deep her disgust and loathing!

"Then she repulsed him, and the wrath of the spirit was great. He would have strangled her with his long talons—for his hands were as the claws of an eagle—but she was guarded by the holy talisman of the Prophet; and he could only gaze upon her in rage, and tauntingly remind her of promises given, and vows she had broken.

"'I vowed to love a beautiful spirit—not a fiend like Eblis, more hideous than the gods of the Adites; to him I gave my promise, not, O wretch, to thee.'

"And she placed the Koran in her bosom as a safeguard against him; upon this the spirit disappeared, and in his rage he split the tower in which she dwelt to the lower foundations, rending it so, that the white bones of the virgins, on which they had been laid in the old times, were visible to all; and all the splendour and luxuries with which he had surrounded Zarela vanished like a sunbeam from before her.

"'Happy were the Arabs of old, and wise too,' said the sheikh; 'for when a son was born' they killed a kid and rejoiced that one more herdsman and soldier was added to the tribe; but when a daughter came, they mourned lest she might disgrace the stock she sprang from, even as thou, O Zarela, hast disgraced thy aged father and the whole tribe of Johasmi! Verily the Prophet saw clearly when he looked into hell, and saw that the greater number there were women.'

"A sentiment hovering between shame and fear subdued the heart of Zarela, and (though she would rather have had Osman of the Abdali) at her father's request she consented to receive the young Sheikh of Dhafar as her husband, and a day was fixed when they should appear before the kadi; but Zarela was visited again by the king of the wicked genii, who although invisible, had been constantly hovering about her, watching for a moment when she might perhaps

relinquish the talisman of the prophet, in bathing or in dressing, but she guarded it as the saviour of her life.

"Again his face and form were beautiful, for he appeared as he had done at first; but the heart of Zarela was steeled against deception, for she knew that he had another and a true form. His face was reddened by passion, and his inflamed eyes shone like two carbuncles, while he swore by his hopes of paradise (which, as he was one of the evil genii, were very small indeed), that he would have vengeance; and after reminding her that the Prophet had declared, how at the last day, those who like her had indulged their passions would become corrupt even as an old corpse; and how those who like her had been false, proud, and vainglorious, would be clothed in a garment of pitch, he vanished as usual like a rushing blast, and with a wild cry.

"She was sorely disturbed, but strove to forget him, and busied herself in the assortment of her bridal garments, and sat *here*—in this very gallery—looking far down yonder valley for the galloping horses and glittering spears of the young sheikh, and the youths of his tribe.

"She looked long and wearily, but he never came; then Zarela remembered the threats of the wicked geni, and wept bitterly for her absent bridegroom.

"Before his marriage the young sheikh had gone on a pilgrimage to a tomb in the desert of Oman, where he said all his prayers like a good Mussulman, with his face towards the Kebab, and thereafter set out on his homeward journey over that sea of sand, where the only living animals were the long-legged ostriches, the fleet antelopes, the wild asses and bustards. But lo! scarcely had he left the precincts of the holy place, when a stupendous column of sand appeared at the horizon pursuing them, and it was in the form of a man!

"Now the camel which the sheikh rode was descended from that which bore the Prophet in his flight from Mecca, and there was none like it in all Oman, Yemen, or Nejed, for speed or beauty. For three days the young sheikh rode like the wind of the desert, and for three days the mighty column of sand followed, drawing nearer and more near, loftier and more lofty, until it was close behind him. On the night of the third it overwhelmed him, and he was buried there for ever, even as the giants who dwelt of old in Nejed were swallowed up, and one only of all his train escaped to Jebel Ahmer, where the old Sheikh Zama rent his beard and cast ashes on his head, when he heard the evil tidings. But there was no time to be lost, and knowing that the Emir of the Abdali was preferred by his daughter, and had moreover a talisman which had adorned the turban of Omar, he sent for him, and though the emir had never seen more of Zarela than her eyes, and loved her only for her gentleness and the beauty she was rumoured to possess, he was overwhelmed with joy, and at the head of a gallant train departed from his black tents near the river of Meidam, and arrived at Jebel Ahmer, untouched by the genii.

Thrice, however, had the latter appeared to Zarela, with his eyes yet more crimsoned with rage, for the talisman of Omar was too powerful for his wickedness; and the third time poor Zarela trembled, for he was accompanied by another genii of prodigious stature, whom she had never seen before, but whom, by his terrible eyes and huge misshapen hands, she knew to be Ifrit, the most cruel of all the wicked spirits.

"Meanwhile the whole tribe of Johasmi were making merry in and around Jebel Ahmer; the horses were haltered and bows unstrung; the tents were pitched without the walls, and a feast prepared within them; the young kids of the flock were killed; rice, milk and dates, honey and sherbet formed the repast; and there were Egyptian almas or dancing girls, story-tellers and musicians, with their pipes, gaspabs, and timbrels.

"Three days they rejoiced on the summit of the Red Mountain; on the evening of the third the young emir and his bride (whose beautiful face he had never seen) were left for the first time alone together. Trembling with all a lover's impatience, he hastened to raise her veil (the last piece of attire the daughters of Johasmi laid aside), but timidly she shrank back, and by this motion his hand detached the holy talisman from her neck, and it fell upon her couch! At that moment, when the ardent lover was throwing his arms around his trembling bride, a roar, as if the rocks were splitting, was heard; a thick vapour encircled them, and when it cleared away Zarela was gone!

"At the same instant of time the aged dervish, her father's friend, was praying beside yonder well that flows through the valley; and lifting up his eyes beheld something like a cloud rise from the towers of Jebel Ahmer. It crossed the starry sky towards the red light at the horizon, which marked where the sun had set, and then vanished in the direction of the vast desert which lies between Mecca and Oman; for the sandy waste is a favourite resort of the genii, and of all wicked spirits.

"The rocks of Jebel Ahmer were rent on one side by the cry of the triumphant genii, and there yet remains the chasm into which no man can enter without being struck dead by a burning wind; and near its mouth are found those wonderful Arabian stones, which when once heated, will never more grow cold.

"Zarela was never seen again; in that dark cloud she had passed away from the side of her terrified husband, and no trace of her remained but her bridal garments, which were strewn about the chamber, and a jewel which glittered among the pillows of their nuptial couch.

"It was her broken necklace, with the talisman or the Prophet! Such is the story of the lady who married a wicked genii."

"Mashallah!" said Zeinab, and all the ladies clapping their hands in admiration as Amina concluded, for the cry of "admirably well," is the invariable tribute of praise awarded to the Eastern story-teller

In the most choice terms I could command, I thanked her for the legend which she had favoured us, and Langley added his thanks to mine; but as this condescension was unnecessary, the emir somewhat impatiently gave a long and angry pull at the amber mouth of his hubble-bubble, which made the rose-water gurgle in the glass vase.

There was something inexpressibly winning in the soft voice and sweet intonations of this young Arab girl, and her fine eyes, (the only features visible) shaded by their long lashes, and very slightly, if at all, touched with kohel, gave additional point and expression to the various parts of her story; on concluding which she relapsed into timid silence; and after plates of figs and hulwah, or sweet-meats composed of honey, sugar and almonds, together with a preparation of milk in cups, were served round by the Abyssinians, we retired, leaving behind us the emir, who manifested no desire of departing.

"Six months—nay, a week ago, Frank, who could have imagined that you and I would have been in the heart of an Oriental sanctum sanctorum—a harem, or what-do-you-call-it?" said Langley, as we walked to and fro in the evening, before the gate of the fort, smoking cigars of our own making.

"In truth, I know not where we shall find ourselves next," said I. "Now you may tell the mess with a clear conscience."

"But will they believe us?"

"Not one; I think I hear O'Flannigan laughing at it as a bounce got up for the occasion."

"But only think," continued Fred after a pause: "only think of this gay fellow of an emir having all those fine women to himself! I wonder what he paid for them a-head, and where he got them. By the shape of their hands I could see they were all handsome, or at least, delicate women. I am sure that little Amina must be a beauty. Faith, I feel quite interested in her!"

"But what do you think of her story, Fred?"

"I understood only one word in three; but I think it is deuced lucky for us that those genii and giants have gone out of fashion, for if our friends, the Abdali, had a few such troops to aid them, neither 'the Queen's Own,' nor the Native Infantry, would keep Aden long. *Geni*—I had a devilish fine horse of that name; he won the best plate at the Oaks for three consecutive years; but I sold him to De Lancy for only five hundred pounds, and lost every shilling of them next day, on a stupid bet with Howard of the Buffs. 'Pon my soul, I would sicken of Aden, but for the opportunity now afforded to my factors and attorney of repairing all the damage a few years of fast-life have done to my exchequer." After another long pause, he said, "Are you not inclined to fall in love with this girl, Amina? (Pretty name, is it not?)"

"In love with her?" said I, while at the word my thoughts rushed

with a pang to the memory of my lost Cecil; "in love with a girl I never saw—an Arab—not very probably!"

"Well—I *am*—very much!"

"Why?"

"I never saw such soft—such glorious eyes!"

"But her nose, Fred; it may be shaped like a powder-horn; and her mouth may be from ear to ear."

"I will bet a thousand it is not; no mouth but a pretty one could speak so sweetly; and from the delicacy of her hand and arm, I am sure she must be perfect. Nothing charms me more than a beautiful hand; it indicates a great deal; what is more seductive in our Englishwomen than their finely tapered hands and white rounded arms?"

"Believe me, Fred, if you saw a fashionable English girl appear just now—say one like Letty Howard—"

"Or Blanche Palmer!"

"Well—or Blanche, since you will have it so,—your admiration for this wild flower of Arabia would die in a moment."

"Perhaps so—but at present I am inclined to fall in love with her."

"Having nothing else to do—eh, Fred?"

At that moment we saw the veiled figure of a female appear on the crumbling wall of the old fort, just above where we were lounging, and the identical rounded arm and beautiful hand, which Langley was praising, was stretched towards us. The white fingers opened, and there fell a little bouquet of freshly culled flowers, as a reward, not to me for my praise of her story, but—as it afterwards proved—to Langley, whose broken Arabic had strangely captivated the ear of Amina.

"Bravo!" said Fred, kissing the flowers as she disappeared, "here are violets—the emblem of modesty, white rosebuds—purity; a sprig of cypress for silence—an Oriental love letter!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FUTHALIS.

WHEN I thought of the fierce and barbarous conflicts which had taken place between our garrison at Aden and the Abdali, and when I remembered the many cruel and hostile acts they had perpetrated, I could scarcely realize the circumstance of Fred and I being guests of their emir, hobbing and nobbing every day over the same bowls of beans and dhourra, or the same pillau of fowl and rice—enjoying ourselves at dinner as much as Christian men could do, in a land where people had breakfast, dinner, and supper, sans knives and forks, chairs and tables.

"I know nothing of the customs of other countries," said Mo-

named, "for I have never been further from Yemen than Mecca; for he who hath not made the pilgrimage to that mother of cities and region of the Faithful, may as well die a Jew or a—Christian. Yet, as every nation of Frangistan, like every tribe of our desert, has its own manners, I cannot but be a stranger to yours; so that I trust, while you do me the favour to tarry in Jebel Ahmer, you will follow your own wishes and inclination in all things—for, in the tent and in the house, the Arab's guest is the Arab's lord and master."

To this handsome speech I replied in proper terms; but in courtesy and the art of complimenting, the emir was infinitely our superior.

We had now been so long at Jebel Ahmer that one morning, as we strolled on the sward before the gate of the fortress, while the emir was at prayer, Fred and I were just concluding that it was high time we were off for Sana, as O'Hara, though one of the best fellows in the service, was not to be trifled with, when our attention was arrested by seeing my old rascal Jaffer and several Arabs, all mounted and armed, issuing from the gate where the brass cannon stood. The ends of their red turbans and voluminous beards floated together on the wind. They were guarding four of the Emir ladies, who were mounted on white camels. Though every vestige of their figures (their quick, expressive eyes excepted) were enveloped in ample shawls, we could easily recognise Amina, and supposed her three companions were the emir's wives.

Before they came forth from the gate we had seen them mount at the door of the harem, when each of these patient and docile, but somewhat unshapely animals, knelt down to receive its load; but before seating herself, Amina gave to her camel a few mouthfuls of sweet cake from the hollow of her white hands; then, opening her veil, she kissed its rough nose, and lightly springing on the hump where her saddle was placed, it immediately rose with her, and began to move away; for neither the camel nor dromedary—two species of the same animal—require to be touched by whip or spur.

The soft wind lifted the light muslim dress of Amina, and revealed to us her left ankle, which was white as a lily, encased in an open sandal of yellow leather, but without any stocking. The whole four had the gayest of Chinese parasols, adorned by little feathers and long silky fringes, but no gloves.

Though it is not customary in the East to recognise females, as this interesting group passed us, guarded by the slender lances of the Abdali horsemen, we bowed very low, which only had the effect of making the ladies quicken their speed, and in doing so, Amina's bridle dropped from her hand. Jaffer awkwardly tried to regain it by using the point of his spear, and, in doing so, pricked the camel on the nose. Alarmed and snorting with pain, the animal swerved furiously round and plunged backwards to the edge of the narrow path, where the sheer rocks overhung the valley below. Amina uttered a shrill cry of terror!

We both sprang forward, but Langley, who was, as he said, "more used to cattle" than me, recovered the fallen bride in a moment, reduced the heavy animal to subjection, stroked it on the head, and placed the reins in the hands of Amina, who, in her terror, had disturbed the complication of her head-dress, and just as Fred was withdrawing, a puff of wind lifted the frail muslin screen, and revealed to us (but for one instant only) a very lovely face—eyes full of the most beautiful animation, a pretty nose, and the dearest little mouth and chin that ever were hidden by one of those hideous veils.

"I knew that girl was divine!" said Langley, triumphantly, as the train wound down the narrow path into the wadi or valley below; "for her voice is like the sweetest notes of an *Æolian* harp, and I know that none but a charming girl could so modulate her tones. You saw her? Is she not quite enchanting?"

"But think of such a girl," said he, after a pause, "one who might ornament any European court, wasting all her sweetness here 'on the desert air,' and being presented, perhaps, to some beast of a bashaw by her liberal brother, just as he would bestow a horse, a cow, a tent, or a hookah!" he added, dashing the remains of a cigar against the wall; "how many girls have we heard extolled at home as beauties, and who turned the heads of a whole mess-table, yet had not a thousandth part of the piquancy, beauty, or artlessness of this Abdali girl!"

"The deuce!" said I, "you are quite enraptured! But take care," I added, as the emir joined us, "you will end by nursing yourself into a fit of love for this black-eyed Arab; and I believe you may as well fall in love with the moon."

"Why so? She is a woman—is she not? and therefore may be 'wooed and won,' as some one says somewhere."

"True, Fred; but the wooing and winning, the fun and flirtation that suited our field-days and rowing-matches, our balls and pic-nics, at Chatham and Canterbury, wont pass muster at all here in Jebe Ahmer, on the other side of the world."

Perceiving that we were observing the ladies and Jaffer's escort, as they wound through the green valley between tufts of sugar-cane, patches of growing wheat, and the fallow-fields where the dhourra of the last season had been reaped, Mohamed told us that this day being their holy one, Friday, or Yawm al jama, the anniversary of the Prophet's arrival at Medina, four of the household had gone to pray at the tomb of his father, the brave and good Emir Ferradeen, who had long maintained a disastrous war with the Futhalis.

It stood about two miles distant, in the prettiest part of the valley, and was a square edifice, having a dome with four little minarets that glittered with their copper gilding amid the drooping palms and thick dark cypresses, which formed a grove around it. There many lamps were burning constantly, and the four ladies had gone to visit the grave and to pray, for some of the Mahomedans believe that the dead can hear their voices as well as the living, for

It is affirmed that the Prophet was wont to salute the departed, when he stood by their resting-places; and for a time we continued to observe the little party of pilgrims with their guards, until they all disappeared among the trees which surrounded the tomb of Ferradeen.

During the heat of noon we retired to a vaulted chamber in the oldest part of the fortress, where a well or marble basin stood in the centre, lending a coolness to the atmosphere, and there, near an arched opening, or unglazed window, facing the ridges of green hills which stretched away towards the north, we smoked and dozed through the sultry hours, lounging on folded carpets and soft cushions. The emir had an immense hookah; Fred and I had each a long chibouque with a cherry stick. The coolness of the place was delightful, while the fragrance of the orange and the citron trees, wafted from the valley below, mingled with perfume that smouldered in a small silver vessel depending from the ceiling of the vault above us.

The shadows of the mountains were beginning to lengthen, and the increasing coolness of the atmosphere made me think that the time was approaching when we should mount and ride in the prosecution of our mission to Sana, when a wild but distant cry arose to our ears from the valley below. The emir's eyes lighted up, he dropped the amber mouthpiece of his pipe, and placed his hands upon his carpet in readiness to spring to his feet.

"Allah Ackbar!"

It came distinctly enough the second time—the terrible war-cry of the Abdali, and our ears tingled as we heard it. Then the hoarse winding of a crooked horn and the dull rolling of an Arabian drum, the usual summons to arms, or to horse, immediately followed, and we rushed from the vault to the esplanade, or yard of the fortress, where all was confusion, hurrying, mounting, saddling and arming; spears were assumed and matchlocks loaded, while cries of "the Futhalis! the Futhalis!—Allah il allah!" went from mouth to mouth.

Spurring up the steep and winding pathway, Jaffer, alone, of all the escort, with the three wives of the emir, returned at full speed from the valley, covered with blood from a wound on the head; his turban cleft, his over-shirt torn, his spear broken, his jambea between his teeth, and his swarthy visage turned to leaden grey by rage and terror, while his gleaming eyes were wild and bloodshot. He related that a band of the Futhalis had suddenly swept down the valley and surrounded the tomb of Ferradeen, where, after a desperate combat, they had slain all the escort but himself, and after maltreating the wives of Mohamed, had borne away his sister, a prisoner towards the mountains.

That fiery gleam of rage which can only shine in the eyes of an Oriental, filled those of the emir at these startling tidings; yet controlling his passion in a masterly manner, he heard him with apparent coolness to the end.

"God is great!" said he, raising his hands and eyes upward, "but

by His house, the holy Kaaba! by the Zemzen well and by the City of the Prophet, I will fearfully avenge this attack on the Sultan Ahmed! Now then—the women to their prayers and spindles—the men to their saddles and spears! The young shall mount and ride with me; the old men and boys shall prepare to defend the fort, and let them see, on peril of their heads and feet, that every matchlock and ginjaul are loaded and in order. Ibn Kogia, bring me my arms."

The emir subdued his passion, and assuming an aspect of placidity, donned his chain shirt, steel cap, and brilliant arms, while we remained idle spectators of the bustle and confusion around us, having but vague ideas of who these obnoxious Futhalis were; and when I attempted to condole with the emir on the loss he had sustained, he stopped me by a verse of the Koran, and replied, that "it was Amina's fate, which nothing could avert, turn aside, or anticipate, for the destinies of all mankind were bound about their necks."

By this time nearly three hundred men were on horseback.

"Come, Frank," said Langley, who was considerably excited, "let us mount and ride with the emir—I should like to have a shot at those devilish Futhalis with this revolver."

"If I was my own master, Fred, I should gladly go, but duty must be done; we have already lost four days, and to involve ourselves in this expedition, the end of which we cannot foresee—"

"True—true," said he, impatiently; "but I don't think you saw this poor girl's face—it is so beautiful! and to think of her being carried off by those Futhalis, who are, I suppose, only greater barbarians than her own people—"

"Hush—I only fear that her brother will not understand the manner in which our duty fetters us, and why we must not engage in any casual quarrel."

"He understands it perfectly," said the emir, who overheard me, "and brave as the Faringis may be, two of them (even such as you) would be but an incumbrance to us in our fleet pursuit. For days and days we may track these robbers, over mountains where you might sink with fatigue, through sandy deserts where you might die of thirst; so pursue your own path in peace, and God be pleased, we shall yet meet again. Kior Ibn Kogia will guide you to the tents of the Sheikh Abdulmelik, to whom you will give *this letter*, and he will guard you to Sana, for the love he bears me, being a good old man who has no quarrel with any one, even the accursed Futhalis."

"Why have they wronged you?"

The Arabian emir smiled bitterly, as he put his foot in the wooden stirrup of his high silver-mounted saddle, and leaped on his beautiful horse.

"The gold of Arabia," said he, "the ivory and the riches which were here of old, when the galleys of Hiram and of Solomon ploughed the Sea of Kolzom, the Gulf of Persia and the Bay of Ormuz, are

no more to be found among us than the sweet incense of Sheba or the treasures of Ophir. All have passed away! the green mountains of Yemen, the yellow sands of Nejed and of Oman only remain, and these, like our dwellers in the tents, are unchanged. Since the days of Ishmael the outcast, our race of the desert—*ahl el Wahbar*—have had their hands upraised against mankind, as it was prophesied of old, and all men's hands are armed against them; for it is too true that rancour, prejudice, and barbarity have formed an impassable gulf between the wild Arab and the man of Frangistan. I know this—I am an Arab, for I have dwelt in cities; thus, the Futhalis in warring against me, are but fulfilling their destiny; and in destroying them, if I am able, I am but fulfilling mine. God is great! Set forward, Jaffer, and let Kior Ibn Kogia follow with all he can collect, after leaving the camp of Abdulmelik. Tell the Abdali that I will not count those who follow me to battle, but that fearfully will I reckon them cowards who remain behind—if, indeed, there be a coward in the desert! This unhappy event,” he added, turning again to us, “has shortened my duty of hospitality, and I regret it the more, because I may never again (for fate is in the hand of God) have an opportunity of making up the loss within the walls of Jebel Ahmer.”

I hastened to assure him that we must, of necessity, have that day bidden him adieu.

“Farewell, then, and peace be with you. You are going to Sana to influence a powerful sultan against me, his most faithful friend and ally. Any other in my place would have decoyed and slain you, but we have eaten salt together, and once you saved my life. Should the Sultan Solyman become my enemy, I have still the unbounded desert—my horse and my spear, the last, the best, and never-lost inheritance of Hagar's desolate son.”

“What a famous hero for a romance this emir would make!” said I to Fred, as Mohamed left us, and I secured in a safe place his letter which he had marked on one corner with the word *Kutimir*, being the name of the dog of the seven sleepers, which many of the Arabs inscribe on their letters as a charm to prevent miscarriage; for this beatified cur was taken up into Paradise, where, no doubt, he has had all the enjoyment a dog could wish for.

The emir, with nearly five hundred men, left the strong fortress and the miserable hamlet beside it; and nothing could be more striking than the appearance of so many turbaned Abdali in their flowing garments, with the barrels of their matchlocks, their long Arab swords, and the bright points of their tasseled spears flashing in the light of the setting sun, as their proud, graceful, and beautiful horses descended the narrow and dangerous path which wound by the sheer edge of the giddy precipices from Jebel Ahmer into the wadi below. As soon as they reached the level ground, every man uttered the shrill *tecbir*, brandished his long lance, urged on his horse to its utmost speed, and in an incredibly short space of time

the whole train vanished into the warm golden haze, which shrouded the lower end of the valley.

While a number of old Abdali, whose snow-white beards and eyebrows gave their nut-brown visages a most venerable aspect, loaded the brass guns before the gate, and the ginjauls, or long Indian muskets, that were fixed in iron rests along the half-dismantled towers (a task in which they were assisted by a mob of half-naked youths, wearing only turbans and cummerbunds, or with their hair knotted up behind—a fashion of the Yemenees), Langley and I mounted, and after a last examination of our arms, set forth under the guidance of Kior Ibn Kogia, a fine and intelligent young Abdali warrior, to reach the village of the Sheikh Abdulmelik.

As we descended the steep side of the Red Mountain, the sun appeared to sink fast behind the distant hills, and when we reached the deep and lonely valley, it dipped below the horizon, which was steeped in a gorgeous flood of yellow light, against which the solemn palms and sombre cypresses surrounding the little dome of old Ferradeen's shrine were strongly defined in black outline; while behind us, the rugged rocks of Jebel Ahmer, and the towers of the ancient fort that crowned its summit, were all bathed in a warm and ruddy glow.

As we rode on, the orange and citron trees which mingled with the growing corn and green cane tufts, shed a rich fragrance on the dewy air; but not a sound broke the silence of the vast valley we were traversing, save the voice of a solitary Arab shepherd, summoning his sheep and goats to the milking, and a wild monotonous air, which was chanted by Ibn Kogia, to please the animal he rode and wile the tedious way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ALMA.

As the hamlet of Shugra, with its old fort, which was the principal residence of the Sultan Ahmed, a wild Bedouin sheikh of the vindictive Futhalis, lay to the eastward of Aden, and at a considerable distance from our line of march, I did not think we ran much risk of encountering his people, especially if we pursued our old intention of reaching the Mocha road, and thus we crossed the hills which girt the southern side of the valley.

Before leaving the latter, we passed traces of the recent outrage, for near the tomb of Ferradeen lay two of the ladies' escort quite dead; one was pierced by a lance, which had been driven through his bare and bronzelike bosom; the other was disfigured by a sword cut which extended from his brow to his bushy beard. This had slain him on the spot, but the other had bled slowly to death, for he lay against a palm-tree with his head in his hand, and his ghastly visage turned towards the keblah.

A little further on lay a gay parasol and one of the little slippers or sandals which had been on the pretty and otherwise naked feet of Amina. Langley sprang from his horse, and for some time regarded the relic with sorrowful interest not unmixed with anger.

"Poor Amina! poor girl!" said he, as we rode on.

"Perhaps this quarrel may prove a fortunate occurrence for us at Aden," said I; "for if these wild men fall out among themselves, our soldiers will be allowed to sleep at night, unharnessed and in quiet."

"But you forget the engaging girl who has been carried off."

"I do not forget her," said I; "but I suppose the girls here are used to that sort of thing; and believe me, Fred, that had duty permitted us, I would gladly have ridden by her brother's side to her rescue. As it is, we must keep clear of all such Arab broils."

As the daylight faded away, and softly and gradually gave place to the lustre of the moon, nothing in nature could exceed the richness and beauty of the lovely scenery; we rode between steep and lofty mountains, where, in the rainy season, cascades sheeted with foam poured over pillars of basalt which supported their green terraces, or, in some places, upheld the tufts of green and mingled foliage, in the recesses of which the nightingale was singing as it can only be heard to sing in the woods of Yemen.

As we ascended the hills from which we could see the red rocks of Jebel Ahmer, and its white Turkish towers shining afar off in the softened moonlight, Kior told us many a wild story of the ferocity of the Futhalis, mingled with others of a more pleasing kind, for the belief in talismans, genii, fairies, and transformation of men into horses, goats, and camels, is yet as strong among the Arabs as it was when the lady who had a hundred lovers was shut up in the wonderful box by the giant her husband, which, as every one knows, was in the days when Schahriar was king of all the Indies.

As we descended into a thickly-wooded valley on the other side of the mountain range, the dew fell so fast and heavily that the muslins of our caps and our benishes were quite moist, and it hung like raindrops on the thick manes of our horses. Ibn Kogia was just announcing that he did not know where we should pass the night, when my horse neighed, which, to the Arabs, is an invariable sign that a camp or something is near.

"Halt! hush! hush!" said Kior, as he reined up, sprang from his saddle, and laying his ear close to the ground, listened intently. He heard nothing to excite suspicion, but requiring us to proceed with caution, blew the match of his musket; we each took a pistol in our hands and moved forward in silence, following Kior, who led the way, keeping as much as possible under the shadow of the thick and magnificent walnut-trees which overhung a narrow and almost dried-up brooklet, that threaded its way through the green but thirsty wadi.

A loud barking of dogs and the glare of a fire informed us that a small party of Bedouin Arabs were encamped, as we could perceive, under the brow of a steep basaltic rock, where they sat in a circle round the red flame which revealed their brightly coloured costumes, their swarthy visages, and those bright weapons, to which every man immediately betook himself as we approached.

"They are wandering Bedouins of Roba-el-Khaly, or the Abode of Emptiness, a desolate place in Nejed," said Kior; "but Ibrahim, their sheikh, is in alliance with the widow of the late prince of Kaa-el-Bun, a man who was more cruel and avaricious than a Persian satrapa, and received from them a yearly tribute of horses and women. They are a wild people and we must be cautious, for they can steal the beard from a man's chin, and will commit a murder for the value of the smallest hair. Peace be with thee, O Sheikh Ibrahim!" cried our guide, with a loud voice, on perceiving that several muskets were levelled at us by the red-turbaned Bedouins who knelt down behind their packsaddles, which usually form the rampart of a bivouac.

"In the name of the Prophet, who are ye?" asked the sheikh, who was sitting by the fire, smoking and reclining against a pack-saddle, with his lance stuck into the earth beside him, and who had, doubtless, been listening to some story-teller, for he was in a very bad humour on our appearance.

"Franks, travellers," I replied, riding boldly up; "but seeking only fellowship, bread and salt for one night."

"Franks, Kafirs," muttered the wild Bedouins as they crowded round us, about a hundred in number, all proud, erect, athletic, and savage-looking men, with their dusky legs, breasts and arms bare, their rough barracans and leather-girdles sustaining their poniards and long double-edged swords, and wearing large and red shawl turbans, the ends of which floated over their brawny shoulders.

"I don't admire these fellows overmuch," said Fred, suspiciously.

"Neither do I; but, as they are robbers by profession, nothing but a bold bearing and great circumspection will save us from them."

"Rather unpleasant," muttered Fred; "I wish the colonel had come on this devilish errand himself."

The Sheikh Ibrahim, a cunning and, for an eastern, dirty-looking old man, wearing a voluminous Damascus shawl of striped stuff, received us with undisguised reluctance; but so sacred is the law of hospitality, and so scrupulous are the Arabs with regard to its rights, that he dared not refuse us a place by the fire, though, for reasons of his own, he was extremely reluctant that we should break bread with himself or his people, for then we could not be destroyed afterwards, as it is their invariable custom never to molest the man with whom they have eaten bread or drunken water, for, by the fourth chapter of the Koran, kindness and hospitality are

specially recommended to be shown to all orphans and poor people, to neighbours, strangers, and travellers.

I showed Ibrahim the letter of Mohamed-al-Raschid, but he spat upon it, and treading it under foot, said, "The emir was a dog and the son of a dog, who had made war upon his friend the Sultan of Shugra." I snatched a pistol from my girdle, thrust the sheikh aside, and recovered the letter with difficulty.

While the boldness of this action delighted Kior Ibn Kogia, who was enraged at such treatment of his chief's letter, it startled the scowling Bedouins, and impressed them with the necessity either of respecting us, or coming to blows at once.

"This to me, thou pitiful Kafir!" said the old sheikh, with unutterable scorn; but almost immediately dissembling his anger—for he had *other* intentions regarding us—he invited us to share with him a supper of dates and honey, with milk and pure water drawn from a well close by. These were placed before us by women who were unveiled, for the wives of the Bedouins are the most free of all the Arabians.

Believing that we were now safe, we all sat down together, and lest I should offend the sulky old bashaw, our host, I never looked once towards the red and yellow screens which hung from the lower branches of the trees, to conceal the sleeping-place of his wives, whose tawny visages stained with henna and daubed with kohel, were incessantly peeping forth at us, and laughing to see men in tarbooshes with close-shaven chins. Among the women were several Almas, or female dancers of Oman, who had paid the sheikh to convey them in safety from Sana to Mocha.

It is scarcely possible to conceive a scene more picturesque than this Bedouin camp, as we then saw it by the wavering gleam of the watchfire, the occasional blaze of which shot up redly and brightly every time dry wood was heaped upon it. On one side rose a mass of pillared basalt, from the clefts of which hung the rich festoons of the copper-plant, the wild fig, the oleander, and the tamarrisk; on the other was the thick dark foliage of the walnut-tree, and the broad heavy leaves of the date-palm. Near us stood the ruined enclosure of a deep and ancient well, and all around were the varied costumes, the brown limbs and bearded visages of the well-armed Bedouins, reclining on their pack-saddles, smoking opium and hempseed, while in the background appeared the noble heads of their hardy horses and the misshapen outline of their still-laden camels and dromedaries, resting on their knees; while afar off, at the horizon's utmost verge, between the stems of the grove on which the firelight fell with sudden flashes, there was visible the black wavy outline of the distant hills, clearly defined against the russet yellow that yet marked in what quarter of the sky the sun had set beyond the Land of the Pilgrimage.

I was anxious to see the Almas dance; but the sheikh told me

surlily, as he smoked away with a most imperturbable air, and with his legs folded under the skirts of his wide-sleeved robe, that "they were weary, especially Haura, the finest of them, and for that night they could not be disturbed."

He then expatiated greatly on the military power and splendour of the Sultan of Sana, whom we were about to visit, and mentioned the wonderful beauty of the damsel whom he had placed in the Castle of the Graces.

"I remember of Mohamed-al-Raschid telling me something of her, and of the great power she exercised over Solyman."

"Upbraided by his court for neglecting all affairs of state, and allowing the unbelieving Franks to take Aden from the Abdali (for he forgets everything in his passion for this new beauty), he had resolved on strangling her; but his heart relented for once, and she still adorns the Hesn-al-Mouhabib, his Castle of the Graces, or of Delights, as it is named by some. I might have kept her for myself—"

"You—was she once yours?"

"Yes, by the faith of the Prophet, she was! I gave Jaffer and a party of the Abdali two she-camels, each great with foal, for her; she was worth far more, but I could not have got it without fighting, and the Abdali were stronger by ten spears. It is not every day we pick up such a flower in the desert; but she was over-dainty for our Bedouin fashions, so I gave her to the sultan for sixty matchlocks, a bundle of matches and ball, of which we stood more in need than of women."

"By what right did you either take or dispose of her?"

"Ignorant Frank," said he, with a contemptuous frown, "knowest thou not that a valiant sheikh hath but to draw his sword to fill his purse? The woman was a captive. My blessing on thee, my good blade," said the sheikh, brandishing his sabre within an inch of Fred's nose; "thou art the best friend of the poor sons of Ishmael!"

"I told you these men were mere robbers," whispered Ibn Kogia.

"If I could but reach this lady's ear, as she influences the proud sultan so much, my mission might be easily accomplished."

"Reach her ear!" reiterated the sheikh, taking his pipe from his mouth, and staring at me in blank astonishment; "dost thou not know that she is in that part of Hesn-al-Mouhabib into which no man but the sultan can enter and live? Faringi! if a man even looked upon her his life would be forfeited! But has your friend lost his tongue that he does not speak?"

"You are very quiet, Fred," said I.

"I cannot get the remembrance of that poor girl out of my head."

"What girl—Amina?"

"Yes."

"She is among her own amiable countrymen; and I wish that we were among ours," said I, rather pettishly.

"You jest; you did not see her face—ah, if you had! But I agree with you that we would be safer with 'the Queen's Own' than among these cut-throat Arabs."

The old sheikh now bade us good night, and retired behind the curtain or screen which was suspended from spear-heads and branches of the trees, for, such like have been the habitations of the Bedouins without change since the days of Abraham, for they trace their descent from one of the twelve sons of Ishmael; and having never possessed houses or homes, they sleep in the sand, under the trees, or wherever night finds them. Fresh brands were heaped on the fire; meat was thrown to the watchdogs; and the whole camp prepared for repose. Those Bedouins who possessed helpmates crept into the nests they had formed among the packsaddles; those who had none were huddled together in recumbent groups, with no other covering than their thick dark barracans of brown wool, which invariably form their dress by day and their couch by night.

"Can we sleep among these fellows in safety?" said Langley; "or shall we sleep and keep guard by turns?"

"For that there is no necessity," said I, as we rolled ourselves in our cloaks at the foot of a walnut-tree, a little apart from the rest; "for, as Kior says, we have a long ride before us to-morrow, and may rest in peace. The laws of hospitality are so sacred, that after having once given us food, none who have eaten with us will molest us."

"You feel certain of this? Well, I am too much of an Englishman ever to trust foreigners."

"Did you ever read the story which Don Pedro de la Badia tells us of their hospitality?"

"Don Pedro de—who the deuce is he? and what was the story?"

"He relates a tale of a Bedouin whose wife had unwittingly given shelter and food to his most deadly enemy, who had craved charity at the door of his tent in the wilderness."

"Well, and what said her accomplished spouse?"

"I should have slain my enemy had I found him here; but assuredly should not have spared thee, O my wife, hadst thou forgotten the sacred law of hospitality."

"All very fine, but I like this sort of sentiment better at the Opera House, or Princess's, than being at its mercy here, and would infinitely prefer the hospitality of a comfortable English hotel," grumbled Fred, as he placed his revolver conveniently under his cloak. I kept my pistols in my girdle, and thus ready for any unpleasant emergency, we resigned ourselves to that friendly sleep which soon sealed the eyes of all around us; and as for our companion Ibn Kogia, he lay beside us on his back, snoring like a trombone, in a manner that very ill consorted with the picturesque aspect of his costume, and the romantic nature of the episode that was to follow.

I had slept for, perhaps, two hours; the whole camp was buried in sleep, even the watchdogs had coiled themselves up head and tail,

and resigned themselves to slumber, when a hand was lightly and timidly laid upon my shoulder. This awoke me; I started, and looked up.

The fire was yet smouldering and burning in gleams, which were reflected by the glistening stems of the trees and their dew-dripping leaves; and close beside me, with her hand upon my shoulder, I saw a woman—a young girl—nearly nude; at least, her sole garment was a short skirt, which reached from her slender waist to a little below her knees; on her feet were a pair of red sandals. Her bare bust, the contour of her neck and shoulder, and her tapered legs and arms, all were beautiful. Her skin had much of that dark creamy tint, or rich golden hue, which some of the Roman women possess, and yet, when contrasted with the purple blackness of her thick and heavy hair, amid which a string of sequins and dinars glittered, it seemed almost fair. Rings of shining gold glittered on her wrists and ankles, and strings of white pearls encircled her neck, and hung below her fine bosom almost to her girdle. Her features were classic and regular, but rendered somewhat too keen by the death-like blackness of her brilliant eyes and their silky fringes, and by the whiteness of her teeth.

Her skirt was woven of gold threads, which shone in the light of the fire, though she strove to conceal herself behind some gigantic plants that grew at the root of the walnut tree; she looked like the beautiful spirit of an Arabian romance, but by the castanets at her girdle I knew her to be one of the dancers, the Almas, whom our mercenary sheikh was escorting, and whom he would not have cared a rush to betray, or sell to some other tribe, if any person would buy women so depraved as the posture-girls of Oman. On seeing this fairy-like form, half nude in her scanty and shining skirt, my first thought was that one of the Almas wished to engage me in an amour or adventure, but I was soon undeceived.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Hush—not so loud," she answered, softly, in the dialect peculiar to Oman; "I am a dancer—Haura."

"Haura—the *Bright-eyed Girl*?"

"Yes," said she, smiling as she knelt down and placed her pretty mouth so close to my ear, that I felt her breath glow on my cheek. "Listen: this barbarous sheikh, Ibrahim, has formed a plan to slay you and your two friends, that he may possess himself of your horses, arms, and property. His desire to have a pair of English pistols has excited him to make the attempt. An ambush of Bedouins, who have neither eaten nor drank here to-night, awaits you, so avoid the narrow path that crosses the wood at the end of the valley, and take that which leads straight over the hills to Taas—to the left hand—do you understand me? Ah, I hope you do!"

"Perfectly," I replied, in anger and perplexity.

"And you will remember?" added this kind girl.

"Even had it been of less consequence to myself and friends, I

would never forget a word that fell from your beautiful lips," said I, drawing her towards me, and kissing her cheek. "But how shall I reward you?"

"Hallo!" said Fred, looking up from under his cloak. "Oho!—what is this you're about?"

At the sound of his voice she sprang lightly away, and disappeared.

"A most agreeable undress—deshabille all over," said Fred, waggishly. "I beg pardon Frank,—hope I have not spoiled something pleasant."

"I wish there was something pleasant to spoil. That girl is our guardian angel!"

"Has she wings?"

"No."

"Nor petticoats either, it would appear," said he. "She is a Bedouin angel—faugh!"

"But what do you think she has just told me?"

"Can't say, for the life of me;—that she wanted some money, perhaps?"

"Money! No, no," said I, with some displeasure.

"That she loved you, then? Faith, I'll watch for the next!"

"Not at all."

"Then I have no idea; but what did she say?"

"Only that we are to be murdered in the morning."

"Indeed! After your fine parable about Don Pedro I would have expected something better. Had we not better give these rascals the slip to-night, or this morning, rather?—two o'clock by my watch, so daylight cannot be far off."

"To leave now might only be to anticipate our destruction. Hospitality prevents them from falling upon us here; but others, their comrades, await us in the woods that terminate the valley, and the girl has directed me how to avoid them by wheeling off to the left."

"By Jove, this *is* a devil of an adventure!"

"We must pay the girl well," said I; "only conceive from what she has saved us."

"Being butchered by fellows as savage as Cape Caffres. D—n it, Frank, the service makes no allowance for such risks, and the Horse Guards as little. Perhaps the girl will go with us."

"She is very pretty."

"Hence my suggestion; but I'll bet a hundred to one, she is not to be compared to that poor pet, Amina."

"Besides, what could we do with her?"

"True; and now, good bye to sleep, for we must wake and watch till sunrise."

"Our betrayers still remained in deep slumber, and we heard no sound save the occasional cry of a distant jackal, and the responsive growl of the dogs that guarded the camp. Under our cloaks, we

re-examined our pistols, tried the caps and charges, then our belts and swords, and the moment the first man of the camp awoke, and the brightening east gave token of the coming day, we arose, shook the dew from our clothes, groomed our horses, strapped our cloaks to the saddles, scrutinizing every strap and buckle with the care of men whose lives were that day to be lost or won. During these preparations, I imparted the discovery of the past night to Kior Ily Kogia, who did not betray the smallest emotion or surprise, but expressed only his perfect readiness to avoid the ambuscade, or fact and fight it, whichever I pleased.

"You take this very coolly," said I.

"Master, how should I receive it?" he replied. "The Blessed Prophet hath inscribed upon your forehead and upon mine, the year, the day, the hour—yea, the moment, when we shall perish. There it is written, although we see it not, with the death we shall die, and nothing human can alter our destiny. If we are to die to-day, we *must die*, if we are to escape, then we shall *escape*. So, fight or fly, it is all one to Kior, the son of Kogia; for in flying, we may only be rushing upon a more certain and terrible death elsewhere."

"This may be Moslem philosophy, but I'll be hanged if it suits me," said I. "Thank heaven, this girl was here; I was just speaking about her before I fell asleep. What says your Arabian proverb? *Speak of an angel and you will see her wings!*"

"Angel—faugh! Dost thou, O Faringi, call that painted harlot an angel?" asked the Arab, with strong disgust.

While the women prepared a breakfast of coffee, boiled rice, and herbs, the wicked old sheikh came forth from his squalid nest among the screens, and before deigning to notice us, uttered aloud the invariable expression of the Mohamedan faith:

"There is no God but one, and Mohamed is his Prophet." Then turning his face towards Mecca, he began to say his prayers, like an old hypocrite as he was.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DIP INTO FUTURITY

THE whole of the women, including the Almas, squatted on the grass with us to share the simple repast, which was soon over, and then I asked Haura, my pretty friend of the preceding night, to afford us a specimen of her talent, at the same time slipping a few coins into her hand. A space was cleared for her, and to the sound of the Arab bagpipe, which has only *one* reed, the gaspah, which resembles the German flute, the tambourine, the Turkish *zil*—two brass basons, which are clashed together, and the rattle of castanets, she and other dancers began a species of performance such as I had never seen before, and have no wish to see again.

Full of lightness, beauty, and elasticity, and possessing figures of matchless symmetry, in the floating ease of their motions, the hideous combination of discord to which they danced was forgotten, though the strange, fantastic, and not over-delicate symbolism of their gestures, startled and dumbfounded Fred and me.

Their half-closed eyes and inviting postures, as they almost fell back and then recovered themselves, were full of grace and languor; and certes, those officers of his Neapolitan Majesty's garrison who, in conjunction with the students of the University, burned down the Opera House at Naples, because the ballet-girls were ordered to assume certain under-garments indispensable to modesty, would have found no reason to complain of our new acquaintances in the matter of over-clothing. Even Fred, who was not very nice in such things, and who had been wont, night after night in London and elsewhere, to level a double-barrelled lorgnette from the omnibus box of the Opera, was somewhat aghast, and, while seated beside me on the grass, gazed upward at the dancers with an expression of waggery mingling with blank astonishment in one eye—for his glass was stuck in the other, a circumstance which made the Bedouins suppose that he was partly blind.

Though in eastern countries none can dance without dishonour, and the profession of a dancer (especially in Egypt and Arabia) is adopted only by women who are consequently branded with shame, the impassioned air, the extended arms, the inviting smiles, and bright knowing glances of these beautiful Almas, charmed and bewildered the savage-looking Bedouin robbers, who leaned on their long muskets, and, in the pleasure with which they beheld the performance, I believe they forgot, for a time, the treacherous project of their sheikh, who was also looking on, seated on a carpet, smoking an immense pipe, with his tawny helpmates clustered behind him.

When the dance was over, Haura, flushed and almost breathless, whispered to me that she could show whatever Fate had in store for myself and friend, which made me suppose that perhaps these Arabian Almas had something of the gipsy or Bohemian in their blood; but tradition and history show that the sorcerers and fortune-tellers of Oman, with much of quackery, mingle something of a higher art, and have studied natural magic, and brought legerdmain to perfection.

"You wish to know the truth?—of course, we all do," said she, shaking back with her slender fingers the thick black tresses of wavy hair from her olive brow, and bending her bright speaking eyes on mine. "I can show you the form of the person you love most on earth, and for a dinar will change it into the form of she you will be wedded to."

"How, pretty one?" said I, gravely; for her thoughtless banter brought back my drowned Cecil to my mind. "If I wed at all, I would hope to have the one I love best—or none."

"Then, if these two are *one*, the figure will remain unchanged. Dost thou remember where a proverb says that truth lies hidden?"

"Yes; at the bottom of a well."

"Then, if ye would learn tidings of the absent, come hither, and look boldly down. Be it father, or mother, or bride, you wish to see, look down; but turn not towards me till the figures disappear."

She led me to the low ruined wall, which enclosed a deep well, formed doubtless in the olden time of Selim for the travellers between Aden and Sana; and though I mistrusted her skill, I had heard so much of the sorcery of Oman, and magic of the Egyptians in the present day, that I was prepared to expect something at least interesting, if not unusual.

I gazed down into the clear depth of the well, and at first saw only my own face, and the bright blue vault above, reflected there; but the pretty and half nude enchantress shook a powder into the water, which made it bubble up and effervesce like champagne, and while it did so she cried in a shrill voice, and in the language of Oman, which is one of the innumerable dialects of Arabia,—

"Spirit of Eblis!—spirit of Eblis! my master salutes thee, and commands thee to bring before us the person he desires most to see!"

As the agitation of the water subsided, and its quiet ripples ran from the centre to the sides of the well, I could distinguish there the small outline of a female figure, with her air dishevelled and her face concealed from me, for she seemed to be weeping. The figure had on a turban, and was dressed as an Arab girl. I gazed steadfastly with astonishment—ay, with something of awe—at this strange vision.

"She whom thou lovest is before thee," said the Alma, in her strange Oman dialect; "let us see if it is she thou wilt wed, for the Faringis wed but one."

Again the powder fell into the fountain, and I must confess to feeling my heart beat quicker; but this time there was no effervescence, and the little figure remained unchanged, save that it seemed to rock to and fro, as one might do in deep grief; but whether this was the effect of some strange human art, or the mere ripple of the water, I could not learn.

"It is the figure of an Arab woman, but the face is concealed from me! She weeps—it is Amina, the Abdali girl! I love Amina? nonsense!"

Such were my thoughts, expressed aloud, as I stooped nearer the water, and, in my anxiety to solve the mystery of this strange vision, awkwardly disengaged a stone from the parapet of the fountain, and it plunged into its glassy depth, dashing up the water. Haura uttered a cry as the vision fled for ever!

This effort of Haura's skill astonished me, and, resolving to watch whether by means of a picture or a painted glass she had thus

imposed upon me, I urged Fred to see what the well had in store for him.

"It is all *bosh*," said he, "I would rather give a crown to the girl for a kiss than for such a ridiculous purpose."

"Give her a crown for both. Try—I saw—who do you imagine?"

"Me, probably."

"Amina."

"The deuce you did!" said he, springing up.

"A pretty girl, in a turban and trowsers, weeping as if her heart would break."

"Well, I shall have a peep into the fountain, and, by Jove! I'll jump in heels foremost if Amina is there. Give our pretty friend another fee, and tell her I wish to dive——"

"Into the well?"

"No, no—into futurity, and see what is in store for me. Render that into choice Arabic, please."

I did as Fred desired. Haura beckoned him to approach and look down; again, like Aladdin's wicked uncle, she shook the magic powder from her pretty hand, and again she summoned twice her pretended familiar. Meanwhile Fred was gazing down with all his might.

"Faringi, do not speak," said Haura; "be silent till I have made the sign."

"Well, Fred," said I, keeping a close watch on every movement of Haura, who was, indeed, an enchantress in more ways than one, "what do you see?"

"The deuce! I see nothing but my own face; stay—there's something now."

"Amina, is it?"

"No, two men chained together—what the devil! My girl, that is not very pleasant, they are in rags, and bearded like a couple of goats. One is standing, and the other lying at length on the ground."

"Those are *yourselves*—was it not the future you wished to see?" said Haura, sorrowfully and haughtily, as she dashed a handful of nuts into the well, and the vision disappeared like the former one.

"Nonsense," said Fred, looking angrily about him, "she must think us very verdant youths indeed, Frank. You had a picture hidden somewhere, my pretty Arab."

"She had not," said I.

"Well, then, a reflecting glass of some kind."

"I had *not*," replied Haura, pettishly, and somewhat sadly, too.

"These figures were yourself and your friend, and one was dead, as you might see by the paleness of his face."

"Which?" said Fred, a little aghast at this intelligence.

"Time will prove, and Azrael show when he comes; at present Haura knows no more."

"Nonsense; nonsense, my pretty brunette," said Fred, tossing

his cigar inadvertently right into the vast beard of Sheikh Ibrahim, and going again to the well, he looked down, but nothing was seen there, save the sky reflected in a blue circle, at the lower rim of which appeared his own good-humoured and handsome English face. Perceiving him rather thoughtful, our young Arab soldier and guide approached him.

"Let not the lies of a juggler delude thee," said he; "for we have heard of Al Mokanna, who pretended to be a prophet, and made a moon rise out of a well for many nights together, in view of the people of Kash. Moreover, sorcery was forbidden by the prophet ever since the daughters of Lobeid the Jew bewitched him by tying nine knots upon a cord which they hid in a well, where it was found by Ali."

Fred laughed the affair away, and soon dismissed it altogether from his mind.

As a Scotsman I was naturally superstitious, or, at least, more apt to be impressed by our adventure with the girl of Oman than one of Fred Langley's country and temperament could possibly be; for I could discover no visible agency by which such visions were brought about; but "use lessens marvel," and we saw so many strange things during our service in Arabia, that I soon ceased to feel surprise at anything. For a time, however, I was left pretty much in the same state of perplexity as Mr. Lane, when the Egyptian magician conjured up a vision of Lord Nelson and others, in a little ink, poured into the hollow of a boy's hand.

We now mounted, and that we might part friends, I presented to the old rogue Sheikh Ibrahim, a red silk scarf, which he received with a grin, expressing as much as to say, "I would soon have had it, at all events," and then we took our departure, riding at a hard pace, for the morning air was yet cool, even sharp, as the winter season was now approaching.

We were no sooner clear of the robbers' camp and their herds of horses, cattle, coarse Abyssinian, short-tailed Arabian sheep and brown goats that were browsing in the vicinity, then we held a council of war on the necessity of avoiding the ambuscades which awaited us at the foot of the valley, and of taking the path over the hill to the left.

"Suppose the dancer hath unwittingly deceived us, and that the ambuscade is on the mountain path, and *not* at the foot of the wadi?" said Kior Ibn Kogia, quietly.

This was a startling and somewhat perplexing suggestion, but Fred and I were inclined to trust the dancer, so after riding on until the trees hid us from the Bedouin scouts, who (we had no doubt) were watching us, we entered a dense thicket that covered the face of the hill, and dismounting, led our horses through it by their bridles for nearly two miles, a slow and tedious mode of progression, which the wily and cautious Kior rendered yet more so by following us backwards, brushing the long grass with a mango

branch, to obliterate every trace of our horses hoofs and of our own feet.

We had not proceeded thus for more than half-an-hour, when we heard several horsemen galloping down the valley to our right; then the sound of musket shots rose sharply up from the echoing copsewood in the hollow below us.

We had no idea what all this meant, but continued our journey with all speed, and afterwards learned that Sheikh Ibrahim, Khaled Ibn Khobaid, and two other Bedouins, had ridden down the valley to ascertain the success of the ambush, and were fired upon by their concealed comrades, who had smoked themselves into a comfortable state of stupidity with opium and hempseed; and thus the old vagabond fell into his own trap, the deadly snare he had prepared for us; two of his companions were shot dead, and his horse, a valuable animal, for which Radd, the vizier of Sana, had offered him five hundred pieces of gold, was slain by three matchlock bullets.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PURSUIT—THE SANTON'S GROT.

By this detour we had somewhat lost our way, and for several hours had to traverse a wild wood, where the old mangoes, the cotton-tree and the light feathery foliage of the tamarind mingled above our heads, while the fig-bushes and the long sword-grass matted the ground we trod on. Here we heard only the scream of the wild eagle, the hiss of the snake as we roused him from his lair with glistening eye and forky tongue; the cries of the owl and raven. It was a luxuriant and beautiful wilderness.

We persevered in pushing our way through the grove of mangoes and cotton trees, by steering towards a basaltic cliff, which appeared at times in the distance, tinted with a roseate glow by the western sun, till we were clear of the wood and found ourselves on the verge of another long and winding valley, beyond which rose a long line of basaltic rocks, rising into mountains—steep, pillared, rugged and inaccessible. Their splintered summits were bathed in warm sunlight, and rose above copsewood of the most beautiful and brilliant green.

Kior Ibn Kogia knew at once where we were, and said that the dwelling of the Sheikh Abdulmelik lay just beyond these mountains, which rose like a wall between us and his valley, and that consequently we would have to ride several miles round, to turn their flank, as there was no path over them, save for monkeys and hyenas.

While we breathed our horses for a few minutes, and cleared their legs and breasts of the thorns and brambles adhering to them,

and gave their smooth coats a dry rub down with tufts of withered grass, a shrill cry startled us, and drew our attention towards the verge of the wood, at an angle where it approached some rocks that overhung the valley, and there we saw a Bedouin, clad in his rough brown barracan and red turban, curvetting his horse along the narrow path, and brandishing his long lance as a signal to others behind.

"An Arab of Sheikh Ibrahim!" said I, drawing my sword.

"The curse of the twelve Imaums be on him!" said Kior, unslinging his musket in great wrath; "his comrades will not be far off."

Over the saddle of his steed he levelled the long heavy barrel for an instant in deadly aim, and fired! The wind swept the cry of the Bedouin past us, like the scream of a wild bird, as he tossed up his arms and fell from his horse, but whether killed or wounded, we took no heed to see, but at once plunged into the bosky woods again, aware that there would be a keen pursuit, for now the longings for vengeance would be added to the hope of plunder, and that innate love of outrage to which the wild men of the desert have ever been prone, for twenty ages and more.

We heard the discordant cries of the diminutive hyænas as we scared them, and saw the chattering monkeys leaping from branch to branch, as we hastened on. We had been in motion during the whole heat of the day, and though our route had hitherto lain in the shady woods, our horses were now becoming somewhat exhausted; thus, if pursued by the Bedouins, most of whom were mounted on camels, we had no chance of escape, unless we could conceal from them our trail, which they would assuredly follow for days, with the most undeviating accuracy.

Kior now took the lead, and soon found a narrow brook which stole through the grove under the thick herbage and sword-grass, and this he knew would effectually conceal our route, while its grateful coolness refreshed our jaded animals, as they trod fetlock deep at every step. For several miles we followed its tortuous windings through a narrow and wooded ravine, which led us to the base of those rocky mountains which we had seen from a distance, but now the red sunlight had died away from their jagged pinnacles, and blue twilight, with the bright stars, were stealing over the sky.

"Allah!" exclaimed Kior, pointing skyward with his lance, as a star fell from its place, "lo! an angel has darted it at some evil geni, who has come too near him."

The groves of plum and walnut trees looked black as if of cypress; the rocky hills were all a russet brown, and the rannel that stole among the verdure resembled a silver thread drawn through a black velvet pall. The dew was falling fast, and as neither Fred nor I had any wish to risk the deadly ague from which our troops suffer so much at Aden, we asked Kior, somewhat impa-

tiently, if it was here we were to halt for the night, or if we had any chance of reaching a hospitable village.

The taciturn Mussulman informed us, that a few miles further travelling would bring us either to the plain of Taas on one hand, or the village of Jennade on the other; but, that in both places we ran a great chance of being cut off by the Subbeih Arabs, who were always on the prowl, and would not value the emir's letter a withered date.

"Pleasant!" said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"And how far is Jennade from Sana, our city of refuge?" asked Fred.

"About a hundred and twenty miles," said I.

"The devil it is!" he exclaimed; "that is a fortnight's travelling at this rate, for we have got on at anything but railway speed to-day: and then what between snakes and hyænas, mosquitoes and beetles, starving on dates and cold water, with the constant prospect of fighting and being murdered, with many other disagreeables, we may, with a safe conscience, wish the colonel's mission in a very hot locality. If I had only my legs under the mess mahogany once more, I would not leave the regiment to turn knight errant again."

I was beginning to apologize for being the involuntary means of bringing him on this unpleasant duty,—

"Oh, Hilton! my dear fellow," said he, "I was only jesting, how could you imagine me to be in earnest?"

"You Englishmen are all such systematic grumblers at everything out of your own country," said I.

"Unpleasant though this duty may be, I assure you that I find it quite a relief, after the turgid monotony of our lives at Aden."

"Well, Ibn Kogia, you have not answered my question; where shall we pass the night?"

"The Haji Nouredin, a santan who lives at the foot of these hills, will afford us shelter, even from the men of Sheikh Ibrahim, for I have thrice taken refuge with him before."

"Is this *the Regenerator of the Faith*?" I asked, startled by a name which recalled my last conversation with O'Hara.

"The same—the glory of Yemen! He is the Lamp of Religion, who promises to regenerate the faith of Islam."

"Fred," said I, "there is some fatality in this. The santan, like the emir, is one of the very men against whom we are to seek the sultan's alliance."

"But what shall we do? to remain here is impossible!"

"Can we trust him, Kior?" I asked.

"If not, there is no Arab in the land worthy of trust. You have trusted me, and you trusted Mohamed, who but three days before would have slain you all. Then why not also trust the good Haji Nouredin?"

"Lead on, then, my boy."

"Already we are close upon his grot—it is here."

As he spoke we found ourselves in a little spot between the basaltic walls which propped the hills and the woods that spread over their summits, and before us stood the dwelling of the santon. On three sides lay that beautiful forest which we had just traversed, and where the palm, the plantain, the walnut, and the plane tree all flourished together in the most glorious luxuriance, mingled with aromatic shrubs that formed the home of a thousand birds, who had long since ceased to sing; along the border of a little pool, formed by the brook, were innumerable bright flowers, the cups of which after being expanded to the hot sun all day, were now folded and bowed down by the dew of the soft Arabian night.

From the craggy mountains and steep rocks that overhung the vale, and were scorched to the whiteness of chalk, a stream gushed in the form of a snowy cascade, and the splash of its waters alone woke the echoes of the place. Between the pillared basalt that upheld the rifted peaks, the wild fig, the pomegranate, the date, and the melon, all bloomed together, while around the mouth of the grotto, which was the retreat of the santon, and which might have formed an appropriate home for the genius of the solitude, the bright grape, the glowing peach, the fragrant citron, the golden orange, and the pink wild-rose, all clustered and clambered together, woven and matted into a mass of luxuriance. It was such a place as Milton might have conceived for the dwelling of our first parents; and to complete the peaceful illusion, a few bearded goats and pretty little sheep cropped the velvet sward that encircled the starlit pool of this Arabian Eden. Such was the dwelling-place of the famous Nouredin (*i.e.*, the *Lamp of Religion*), the Regenerator of the Faith, whose name has more than once found its way into the London and Indian papers.

He occupied the cavern into which a celebrated dervish had retired in the days of the Prophet, and where he had slept for two hundred years, waking in the reign of Abdallah III., the conqueror of Greece, to find beside him the last remains of his ass's skeleton, its bridle-bit and iron shoes; while his basket of dates and figs, with his jar of water, stood beside him untouched and undecayed, as when he fell asleep, two hundred long years before, like Ozair among the ruins of Jerusalem; hence, it was named the Cave of the Sleeper, and before its door there grew, as Kior informed me in a whisper, a sprout of that identical tree, which miraculously sprang up in full foliage, and loaded with fruit, in five minutes after the Prophet had placed the kernel in the earth.

"But in these mountains," he added, "are many such grottoes, for there dwelt the idolatrous tribe of Thamud, who inhabited Aden before the days of the wicked King Ad; their dwellings in the rocks were to be found in great numbers in the land of Hejr, till a storm from heaven destroyed them."

After making many pilgrimages to Mecca, where he had kissed the

Black Stone, flung pebbles at the Devil, and quaffed of the Zemzem well, till he rolled on the ground from sheer distension, like a true Haji; after having rubbed his forehead on the Sacred Camel, and made a journey as far as Khorasan, the Land of the Sun, to visit the tomb of Ali Riza; after procuring a bottle of the wonderful Water of Immortality, and narrowly escaping death, when, in a religious frenzy, he ran a moqua (or a *muck*, which is not confined alone to the Malays), when he rushed about the streets of Sana with a jambea, in the haft of which were united the hair of his parents, stabbing Jews, Simalees, Christians, Guebers, and all who were not Mahomerrans—after all this active novitiate, the sainted Noureddin had retired to this beautiful wilderness, where, unlike the majority of Arabian santons, who are mere hypocrites that live on the credulity of the people, he passed a harmless life, but indulging in visions of exterminating all the enemies of Islam, and chiefly the red-coated Faringis who had ensconced themselves at Aden. By the gravity of his manner, the simplicity and asceticism of his life, he ingratiated himself with the wild tribes who traverse Yemen. Thus, the veneration he enjoyed was great, and the Emir Mohamed, the neighbouring sheikhs, even the petty monarchs of Sana, Shugra, Jaffa, and Lahadj, as well as their people, sought his blessing or advice on every emergency; while, in secret, he was leaving nothing undone by the exertion of his mighty influence to mould them all into one fiery focus of war against the unbelieving Faringis, whose presence polluted the land where the Koran was written.

Such was the person on whom we were about to intrude, unbidden.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LAMP OF RELIGION.

WE knocked repeatedly at his door (which was rudely formed of rough stems pegged upon a cross-rail,) before a solemn voice within summoned us to enter.

We had heard so much of this formidable Santon Noureddin, that I must own it was with emotions of considerable interest we approached him. Kior opened the door, and within we saw a spacious grotto, the roof of which was a horizontal mass of lava, supported by pentagonal columns of basalt, all formed as regularly by nature as if they had been hewn by a mason's hammer. From the roof there hung by a chain, a lamp of brass, having two lighted wicks. At one side of the grotto was a species of altar, at the other, a recess hidden by a curtain, beneath which appeared a sandalled foot upon a stool of stone. Kior told us to "wait without," until he had removed the scruples of Noureddin, whose hatred of Faringis bordered at times on insanity.

Ibn Kogia took off his slippers, and approaching the curtain, kissed the foot that appeared below it, and after a brief prayer, with his face towards the keblah, an offering of some small trifle, and a long explanation, amid which I frequently heard the name of Emir Mohamed, he implored the holy santon "if he was pleased to show his face."

On this, the tattered curtain was dashed violently aside, and rising from his seat, with a staff like a war-club in his hand, the Lamp of Religion approached us, with angry scrutiny in his deep-set eyes.

In figure, he was tall and thin; a snow-white beard of great volume, and never profaned by steel, spread over his breast and below his girdle; his shaggy eyebrows were equally white, and so long that they mingled with the hair which waved around his temples, in tangled masses, like a lion's mane; his eyes were full of restless animation, and though sunken and hollow, gazed upon us with that keen and fiery expression which only the eye of an Arabian santon can wear.

He was, indeed, a strange and unearthly, but impressive specimen of that class of religious mendicants who, under the various denominations of santons, dervishes, and fakirs, are so greatly venerated by the men, and (of course) still more so by the "pious sex," throughout all Persia, Turkey, and Arabia. He was clad in an ihram, or pilgrim's mantle, consisting of two pieces of woollen cloth, without *seam* or decoration; these were wrapped round the loins and over the neck and shoulders, but left the right arm bare. His turban was of green, the sacred colour.

"Thou hast not done well, O Kior Ibn Kogia, in bringing here those Kafirs of Aden," said he, in a rich and harmonious voice, to which his broad vowels and guttural Arabic gave a fuller power. "I respect the letter of the Emir Mohamed, and I respect more the laws of hospitality, but is there no other place, in all this vale of Kaa-el-Bun, where these men might find shelter?"

"Holy santon," replied Kior, in the same grave manner, and with something of alarm, "they are pursued by the tribe of Sheikh Ibrahim, and with my life I must answer for theirs to my master the Emir. It is far from here to the tents of Abdulmelik, and farther still to Jennade, and I know of no safer place for them than the Grot of the Sleeper."

"Kior," continued the santon, with greater gravity, and with a darker frown at us, as we stood on foot holding our horses at the door, "in the first place, I am not to be deceived by the attire they have assumed; in the second, they will only pollute my cell by their presence; in the third, Sheikh Ibrahim is *my friend*; in the fourth, they know not even the holy passage revealed on the night of Al Kadr, by which I am impelled to offer them protection."

"We do, most reverend Noureddin; and more than that," I replied, assuming his own inflated style, as, luckily for us all, a

moment's reflection brought the passages to my memory, "Let not those who are covetous of what God in his bounty hath given them, imagine that their avarice is better for them; nay, rather for them it is worse, for that which they have covetously *reserved*, shall be bound as a collar about their necks at the last day—and this collar shall be a twisted serpent."

The mingled expression of scorn and religious hatred which darkened the brow of the santan, passed away when he heard this quotation, which, thanks to my studies when on board the Candahar, I brought out all at a breath. As he prided himself on knowing all the hundred and fourteen chapters of the Koran by heart, he was greatly pleased, and opening wider his door, said, blandly:

"We are all sons of dust and children of care; the true believer who is bound for Paradise, and the poor benighted Faringi, whose doom is the Pit of Borhût. For this night, Nouredin will protect you—enter; though Kafirs, you are welcome."

"But the horses, holy santan," said Kior, "what shall we do with them; for the dew falls fast, and some of Sheikh Ibrahim's men may pass through the valley."

"Lead the horses into the inner grotto," said the santan, "and there they will be safe, warm, and unseen."

"A door of rough wands entwined with palm-leaves gave entrance to an inner and more spacious cavern, the end of which was buried in obscurity; but it seemed of great extent, and to have another outlet, if I might judge by the cool wind that came through it and stirred the soft tamarisk leaves of which the poor santan made his bed, and among which Kior prepared to stable the horses, but being aware that we might be roused in the night, and have perhaps to make a sally, he removed neither saddles nor bridles, but only relaxed a buckle or two, after which he went out barefooted, and with a branch brushed carefully all the dewy grass, to obliterate every trace of our horses' hoofs.

While Fred and I groomed our own nags, we were struck by the superior manner of our Arab comrade, when similarly engaged.

The tenderness of a mother to her infant could not surpass that of Ibn Kogia to his horse. He kissed it repeatedly on the nose and forehead, and gently wiped its fine large hazel eyes with the soft muslin of his turban, saying again and again,—

"My life, and dearer to me than life; my sweet, my beautiful Gazelle! May Allah, and his holy Prophet, keep thee from weariness and wounds, from sickness and the eyes of evil!"

For nearly half-an-hour he continued to talk thus, as I have sometimes heard our dragoons do to their chargers; and the noble barb seemed sensible of his kind caresses, for he rubbed his head against Kior's bronzed cheek and breast, and licked his hand like a good and faithful dog.

"Frank," said Langley, who had been observing him with something of admiration; "in England such a room would be invaluable:

But I hope our friend with the beard has something better for us to sup on than dates and cold water."

"Seasoned with scraps of the Koran?"

"I have no fancy for supping with such a hermit, unless, like Scott's clerk of Copmanhurst, he has a corps de reserve, in the shape of cold pie and a bottle of wine."

The poor santon had no such substantial fare to offer us; but he produced a wooden dish, in which were a quantity of rice, beans, and flour, all boiled into a mess, which, after he had said, "Bismillah!" we supped with butter and milk; and thereafter, to his great annoyance, we each took a jorum of brandy, from the large hunting flasks which hung at our waist-belts.

"God forgive me for eating with infidels who believe not in the Koran," said he, in a low voice, as he bent his head towards the keblah.

Like all the mollahs and dervishes of the East who are anxious to engage strangers, especially the Christians, in polemics, our santon interlarded his whole conversation with scraps of the Koran and references to marvellous and sacred traditions, but I gave the good man his own way, and freely subscribed "yea, and amen," to whatever he advanced, no matter how absurd. Kior was so pleased by the favourable position I seemed to hold in estimation of the santon, that I am certain that he would have gone to the cannon's mouth for me, or done anything but sell his horse Gazelle, with which he shared his supper; for it was his rule to give it a piece of everything he took, even were it the wing of a fowl or a slice of roasted meat.

"By Jove," said Langley, "nothing astonishes me more than the love of those Arabs for their horses, when contrasted with their barbarity to men."

"If you love your wife, Kior, but half so well as you do that fine horse," said I, "she will be the happiest woman among the Abdali."

"When I had one, I loved her even better than Gazelle—but God is great!"

"How! is she dead?"

"No; but I put her away—divorced her!"

"She behaved ill, then?"

"Ill?" said the Arab, clenching his teeth; "No; oh, no! Zoraida was pure as the lily that grows by the Holy Well, and spotless as Fatima; but in an evil hour I divorced her because she had no children, and then came repentance—but, alas, too late! When all her jewels were sold, Zoraida was in want, and she married Jaffer; then, when I saw her in the tent of another, all my old love returned, and I was on the point of stabbing myself for grief, and would have done so, but for the advice and consolation of the holy Nouredin, who reminded me, that in slaying myself, she would assuredly di

before me, and I wished not to injure a hair of her beloved head, though now it was pillowed on the bosom of another!"

"Perish before you. But how, Kior?"

"Because, on the night we were wedded, she was the first who slept, and we all know that they who sleep first on the nuptial night will go first to the grave; thus I could not die before Zoraida! Dost thou understand?"

Fred smiled at the solemnity of Kior, and pulled out his cigar-case, which the santan looked at with considerable interest, evidently regarding it as a talisman or reliquary.

"I'll offer the old boy a cigar.—Will you have one?" said he, opening the case before the santan, whose face (although he had no objection to a chibouque), expressed the greatest repugnance as he pushed it aside; but Fred, with his usual coolness, scraped a fusee on the side of a jar close by him, lighted a cigar, and puffed away with the utmost composure, arranging his hair, in a pocket-mirror, and making himself quite at home.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE WATER OF IMMORTALITY.

THE jar against which Fred Langley had so irreverently applied his patent Vesta was of copper and contained water brought from the Zem-zem Well at Mecca, for the santan had of course been repeatedly a haji, and regularly returned from every pilgrimage with a fresh supply of this blessed liquid. Close by it hung his keffin (Anglicè, *coffin*), or the shroud in which he was to be wrapped when dead, and which had been dipped in the same holy fountain, and thereafter dried in the sun on the gable of the Kaaba. Among various relics and mysterious odds and ends, which lay in the keblah, or niche, that was hewn in the wall of the grot to mark the direction of Mecca, I observed a well-used copy of the Koran, and a small crystal phial, which contained a bright and glittering liquid. I begged permission to examine the Koran, which proved to be a MS. copy, written in the pure and beautiful dialect of the Koreish, the true Arabic tongue, and the *Bismillah* preceding every chapter was flourished in green and gold.

"Thou hast read this book, O Faringi," said the santan, impressively; "and yet thou wilt not, or cannot, see its meaning!"

I was silent; for with such a man, one who had run a moqua, this was dangerous ground.

"Thou art like one," he continued, "before whom a glorious light is unfolded, and yet must close his eyes because of the brightness thereof, and will not, or dare not, see! Is it not so, O Kaïr? But a day shall come to the Faringis, when, as with the

Israelites of old, Mount Sinai will be torn up by the roots, and shaken above their heads to terrify the unbelieving."

As he spoke, the glare of fanaticism mingled in his eyes with what I thought the gleam of incipient insanity, and, desirous of changing the subject, I asked what the phial contained.

"Only one drop of the Fountain of Life; but lo! that drop hath filled the bottle."

"Is this the fountain that was guarded by Khizer the sage?" I asked, astonished at his credulity.

"That *is* guarded, thou meanest. Right, Faringi. It is the same; and I received it from the Seyd Ammer Ibn Yaser, a haji, who had come from a distant pilgrimage, and who averred that it was the Water of Life from the Land of Darkness. Poor Ibn Yaser! he was slain by your Kafirs, when they first polluted Aden with their unsainted presence. Thou hast heard of how Iskander went in search of this miraculous water, in the times of old?"

I professed that I had not.

"Then listen, O Faringi!" resumed the santan, seating himself cross-legged, and lighting his long pipe; "Iskander, the son of Philip, the tamer of Bucephalus, after conquering the Thebans and Persians, the Syrians and Egyptians; after building the city which he vainly named from himself Iskandriek, and which he placed so skilfully near the Mediterranean, the Nile, and the blue waves of Kalzom, resolved to visit the temple of the pagan god Jupiter Ammon, which stood afar off amid sandy deserts, beyond the frontier of the Land of Darkness. And he set out with a chosen band of his bravest warriors, for he had resolved that, though all should perish of fatigue and thirst but *two*, that they should hear him proclaimed what he averred himself to be, the son—not of Philip—but of the *marble god*!

"The hardy warriors who followed him, Greeks who had conquered half the world, were overcome by terror, when far from all human habitation, they found themselves traversing the vast Lybian deserts, which spread around them like a yellow sea, where there was not the smallest vestige of verdure, nor the visible footprint of any living thing. Many perished of thirst, many of hunger, and many more sank under exhaustion and were left to die, and be overwhelmed by the moving columns of sand, while the air became as the breath of a furnace, or the hot vapour that is spanned by the bridge of Al Sirat.

"Even the proud Iskander al Rumi was about to lose all courage, and his spirit sank at the terrible prospect of being, perhaps, the *last* survivor of his band, for they were dying fast; when lo! the heavens began to grow dark, and the clouds to gather; the rain fell in torrents, and the sinking soldiers gladly opened their parched mouths to catch the grateful shower that sowed the barren desert as if it fell upon a trackless sea.

"Multitudes of croaking ravens appeared, and these flew before

them as guides, screaming as the gloom deepened, and it deepened fast, till the desert air became so black that they could not see each other's faces, for now they were in the Land of Darkness.

"Seven days and seven nights they journeyed in this region of gloom, marching over a desolate track, and when fatigue came upon them, they slept on the sand, the hue of which they could not discern.

"At length, afar off, they descried a faint green light, like that of an emerald, and Iskander urged them on, for he knew that it came from the raiment of Khizer, the Giver of Youth to the animal and vegetable worlds, the Guardian of the Well of Life, which stands on the utmost verge of this awful region of gloom. As they approached, the garments of the venerable sage became more and more resplendent, until the green light thereof shone on their polished helmets, their brazen shields, and beamy weapons, and on their pallid faces; for when they stood beside him, his raiment glittered like a column of emeralds, diamonds, and green jaspers.

"'Hail, most holy of sages,' said Iskander, dismounting from his horse, while his proud heart trembled with mingled awe and joy; 'give me to drink of the waters of everlasting youth and unfading immortality.'

"Khizer smiled sadly, and dipped a golden cup into the verdant Water of Life, which sparkled like green crystal, and held it towards Iskander, who trembled yet more with eagerness; and so impatient was he to quaff the bitter but intoxicating draught, that alas! he spilled the whole contents of the cup; they were drunk by the thirsty sand, and not a drop remained!

"He implored the sage to refill it.

"'Nay,' replied Khizer, with grave severity, 'the toil of so many days and nights, the terror of the long gloom, and those vast deserts of burning sand, where so many valiant men have perished of hunger and thirst, of heat and toil, might have taught thee, at least—*patience*—but they have not, and the stern law of Fate will not permit me to fill this cup a second time to any mere mortal man.'

"With these words the venerable face and shining figure of the sage faded away, and, as they disappeared, so was the darkness dispelled, and the bright sun shone joyously upon the thick shady grove, and the mighty peristyle of the temple of Jupiter Ammon, where, by bribing the mercenary priests of the false god, the vain-glorious Iskander was declared to be the son of a marble block, and was ever after known as Iskander al Rumi, for the idol had on its temples the horns of a ram; yet how far happier would he have been if one drop of Khizer's blessed fountain—even so much as this phial contains—had but touched the tip of his tongue!"

As the santon concluded this strange story, which, like every Arab tradition, referred to a very remote antiquity, he held before me the glittering liquid, which had been imposed upon him by

some cunning haji, or dervish, more gullible, perhaps, than himself.

Meanwhile, Fred Langley was teaching—not very wisely, as I thought—Kior Ibn Kogia, the platoon exercise with his long musket, and he picked it up with wonderful readiness; thus, while the wild-eyed santan, seated cross-legged before me, pursued with great vehemence, an exordium on the true faith, the words of command, which Fred vociferated as if he had been drilling his company in the cavern, most absurdly filled up the pauses between every sentence.

"Poor deluded Kafir," I remember the santan saying, among many other things; "what are all the joys of *your* promised paradise, to those held out to us? They are like the frost and snow of the Tartar winter, when compared to the fruit and flowers of summer in Arabia the Happy. There will be gardens greater than those of Irem, fairer than those of our first parents, watered by the crystal waters of life, and shaded by trees covered with golden leaves; crowns of glorious lustre and robes of the finest silk that Persian fingers ever wove, adorned with diamonds and other precious stones; tents and palaces of gold and emeralds, with floors of shining marble—for so saith the Koran! There we shall have the most fragrant coffee and the sweetest sherbets, cooled with ice; girls beautiful as summer, their fine persons redolent of delicious perfumes, with black eyes of more than mortal softness, and hair whose length alone will hide their unclothed loveliness—for so saith the Koran! Of these, each true believer will have seventy-two, with eighty thousand servants: three hundred to attend when he eats, and they will serve him with three hundred dishes of gold, each containing three hundred kinds of food; and he shall eat without ever being filled, and drink without ever being intoxicated—for so saith the Koran! And in those gardens of everlasting joy, standeth the Toaba—the Tree of Happiness, around the stem of which, even thy fleet horse, O Kior Ibn Kogia, could not gallop in a hundred years; it beareth all the fruits of the earth, and all its leaves are tongues, whose melody will mingle with the choirs of angels and the sweeter voices of our dazzling houri. Such are a few of the celestial joys promised by Mohamed Resoul Allah—the only true Prophet—to the faithful!"

"And the women, santan, what of them? for I remember to have read, that when one who was aged asked the Prophet what she should do to reach paradise, he told her, bluntly, to save herself all trouble on that score, as no old women were admitted there."

"A woman is but the moiety of a man—yet in the other world they shall have their own place of delight."

"And spouses well perfumed too?"

"The Koran saith *not*," replied the santan, with something of a scowl; "but for such as *thee* another place is assigned, and from the lowest depths of the Seventh Hell, where thou shalt be shod

with shoes of fire, fettered by the chains of error and obstinacy, and where thy skull shall boil like a pot of rice, and where serpents shall sting and vultures gnaw thee, thou shalt see the glories none can ever taste but the faithful! Millions upon millions of years shall roll away; our life here will be looked back upon but as a speck upon the horizon, as a grain of sand in the desert, as one wave in the ocean of time, but that happiness shall never decay; the houri will never be less blooming, or less loving; the desires will never die, or the sweets of Paradise be less alluring, for an appetite that never palls; for there, by the shores of the River of Life, youth, love, and light, and joy, can never fade, can never—O Bismillah! never die!”

“Stand at ease!” shouted Fred; “well done, old fellow—here endeth the first lesson.”

There is an Arabian proverb, which says, “It is wise to show but one eye, in the land of the one-eyed.” Thus, I allowed the old santon, who was evidently half demented, to have all the conversation and exordiums to himself, and the result was, that we all parted, or rather, resigned ourselves to sleep for the remainder of the night, in the highest possible good humour with each other; and I have no doubt that it was with some difficulty that the fanatical Regenerator of the Faith reconciled himself to the idea, that he was sheltering under the roof of his sacred grotto two of the hated Faringis, who disbelieved the Koran, drank wine, ate pork, neglected the fast of Ramadan, and were the committers of many other enormities.

For an hour he retired behind his curtain to read the Koran, although he knew every verse of it as well as the features of his own remarkable face.

Meanwhile, Fred sang a song, and to banish our adventure with the Alma, and the unpleasant revelation of the well, conned over a somewhat tattered Punch, and Kior told me wonderful anecdotes of the speed, docility, and bravery of his horse Gazelle, which could do everything, and was scarcely surpassed by those elephants, which, as Plutarch tells us, danced upon a tight rope, or the patriotic parrots, which, after the battle of Actium, shouted, “Victory to Cæsar.”

My watch, however, warned me that the hour for repose was come, and, soldierlike, we slept in our cloaks, and Kior Ibn Kogia in his henish, among the withered leaves and reeds.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN ALARM!

ABOUT four in the morning I was wakened from a sound sleep by Ibn Kogia. The cavern, with its sharp angles and deep shadows, the iron cruise, the figures of the sleeping santon and Fred Langley, with our horses in the background, made up a novel and striking scene.

"Hist!" said the Arab, fixing his piercing eye on me; "do you not hear something?"

"No; do you?"

"Armed horsemen are passing down the wadi—they are approaching!" he added, snatching his sword, and springing to the rough door of the hermitage, through the many orifices of which he pierced into the cold blue atmosphere of the starlit morning; and, on following him, I could perceive a number of men in white turbans and brown barracans, armed with long muskets and longer lances, and all mounted on horses or camels, defiling from the wood, and passing round the margin of the pool, which lay before the santon's dwelling.

"Up—up, Fred, those rascally Bedouins are upon us," said I; "and the foreshadowing of fate in yonder well may yet come true, after all! Look to your pistols, and rouse the old santon."

Langley was up in a moment; he placed his revolver in his belt, and assisted us to roll a large stone (on which the santon was wont to kneel in prayer) behind the slender door, as a temporary security.

"Wallah! they are passing!" said Kior, joyfully, as he peeped through the crevices again; "but I am assured they are after us, for see, they thrust their spears into every bush and thicket—now they halt!"

"They dare not look here, I presume?"

As the devil would have it, at that moment the horse of our guide, being instinctively aware that others were near, uttered a loud neigh. On this infallible signal that horsemen were not far off, the Bedouins, who, to avoid an alarm, seldom ride mares on their secret expeditions, all drew together, and, after a moment's conference, with a loud yell and brandished lances, dashed towards the hermitage.

"Away, O Faringis," said the santon, "for these are wild men, who may neither respect me nor my dwelling."

"Away?" I repeated, angrily, while grasping my horse's bridle; "must we sally out upon them, and sell our lives as dearly as possible before the door?"

"Bismillah—no! The inner grotto is a mere chasm in the mountain; it penetrates to the opposite valley. Take down the lamp to light your way; go—go, and peace be with you. Quick, Kior Ibn Kogia, thou knowest the path; thou art a Believer, and strong in heart. Set these poor Kafirs an example!"

At that moment the butts of twenty spears came thundering on the frail door, and the caves beyond it rang with a thousand echoes.

Our pursuers were true Bedouins, of that ferocious species whose daily struggle with nature for food, and with man for clothing, arms, and powder, kept them in a state of perpetual warfare, to defend what they possessed, and wrest from others that which they required—men who never lie down under their only roof, a tree, but with their horse and spear beside them, lest the *tecbir* of some hostile tribe, on a midnight inroad, should rouse them to battle. For, in

the desert, it is a maxim, that he who cannot protect his life, his women, and cattle, deserves them not.

Now, in the East, as santons are so venerated that, like the Jesuits elsewhere, they at times have swayed the fate of empires and of kings, the Haji Nouredin was wroth at the treatment of his door.

"Open, santon," cried the voice of Sheikh Ibrahim; "open, for thou hast Kafirs here—Kafirs, who have slain the brother of my kinsman Khaled Ibn Khobaid, and we have sworn by the Kaaba to tear the life out of their hearts. Open, I tell thee, santon; I am thy friend, the Sheikh Ibrahim."

"Begone, dog of a sheikh!" exclaimed Nouredin; "begone, lest I make the earth open and swallow you up! There is dirt upon your beard, and your turban is awry."

"I tell thee, open," said the sheikh, hoarsely, "and thou shalt have three she-camels, each ten months gone with young."

"Thou wouldst tempt me to sin, even as the devil tempted Cain to slay his brother, by crushing the head of a sparrow between two stones. Yield them, sayest thou? I will not; for the Faringis have eaten bread and salt with me."

"Allah hu! they *are* here!" cried several Bedouins, with savage joy.

"Art thou, O santon, that Nouredin who hast sworn to exterminate the Kafirs?"

"I am, and fearfully shall I keep my vow."

"Mayest thou live for ever!"

"I am sorry I cannot return the wish," replied the santan, spitefully.

"Wallah! open; for I have sworn to have the life of him who slew my brother on the mountain," cried the Bedouin Khaled Ibn Khobaid.

"Wouldst thou have had him die in his bed, like a woman or a fakir?" asked Nouredin.

"Santon, this is folly," said the sheikh, in a low voice, as he applied his lips to a crevice of the door; "thou art mad, and hast forgotten that *he who lendeth succour to the oppressor shall, ere long, fall under his subjection*. I must have the heads of the strangers and the Abdala, for I have sworn it."

"If thou hadst sworn by every hair in the holy beards of the three hundred and thirteen apostles, and the two hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets of Islam,—yea, and by every hair of the dog that begot thee, thou shalt not."

We heard no more of this very strange, and, for us, very unpleasant altercation, as the Abdala had now unhooked the lamp, and, holding it in one hand, while grasping his horse's bridle with the other, led the way through the cavern. As fast as we could, Fred and I followed, each leading his horse by one hand, and holding a cocked pistol in the other; for every second of time we expected to

near the frail barrier which lay between us and the now dismounted Bedouins dashed to pieces.

But for the eminent peril in which we were placed, I could have admired the striking and picturesque aspect of the wonderful cavern we were threading. It seemed to penetrate the very heart of the mountain range, on each side of which lay a vertile wadi, or vale. The walls were entirely formed of pentagonal stone-columns, or shafts, all placed in vertical clusters, and supporting a mighty superincumbent mass of horizontal rock, from the face of which depended thousands of glittering stalactites. Leading his beautiful Arab horse, with its crimson saddle, at which hung his musket and spear, Ibn Kogia, led the way, holding up the flaring oil-lamp, the lurid and smoky gleam of which fell on his scarlet turban, swarthy face, and flashing eyes, and on his bright sword and shield, pistol and jambea; on those long ranges of volcanic pillars, vanishing away into terrible obscurity, and those masses of shining rock, through which the grotto wound, with their varied tints of red and grey, with crimson, yellow, violet-coloured, or snow-white pendants, that hung so low in some places that we could scarcely pass, and the head of Kior's jarring spear struck fire among them, though, in other places, the roof was so high that we could scarcely see it in the gloom, as we stumbled onward over masses of fallen stone, half leading and half dragging our startled horses.

All this formed a scene like the chapter of a novel, and I shall never forget it!

We had not penetrated above a hundred yards when a wild yell, or rather the roar of many mingled voices, burst upon our ear, as it pealed along the roof of the natural vault, and woke its farthest echoes, announcing that the Bedouins had burst in the frail barrier, and passing the outer grotto, or chapel of the santon, were after us in full pursuit.

"Bismillah, come on!" cried Kior, "for here are the spears of Sheikh Ibrahim."

"Yelling like a pack of hungry hounds when the game is in view," said Fred. "D—n them, here go all the balls of my revolver!"

"Wait a little—let them come to closer quarters," said I, looking back, but in the obscurity behind being totally unable to perceive anything, though the light we carried directed them how to follow us; and but for the incessant winding of the chasm, we must assuredly have been shot down, for they fired repeatedly, but at random; and while the reports of their long muskets, drowning even their fierce cries, rang like thunder in that tremendous vault, their bullets frequently hissed past us, and were flattened out like silver stars on the slimy rocks beyond. I was in the rear, and close behind me heard one, who, outstripping all other pursuers, was almost within arm's length of us; turning, with a heart full of fury, I levelled my pistol to shoot him dead, when I discovered the excited face of the wild santan.

"On, on," said he, breathlessly; "Kafirs, Faringis, unbelievers though ye be, I would not have ye perish here; one act alone will save you, and I will risk it, though the whole hill of Djobla should descend upon us," and with wonderful agility he sprang on before us, dragging an iron crowbar, and disappeared in the obscurity in front.

"Here they are," said Fred; "Hilton, for God's sake, let us turn and give them one volley!"

Bang went the heavy musket of Kior, and ping—ping—ping, followed the bullets of Fred's revolver with those of my rifled pistols. We fired nine sharp shots point blank into the mass of white turbans and barracans behind us; a frightful yell followed, and then there was a moment's stillness; they had received a decided check, for nine shots from *three* men terrified them, and on we went, stumbling forward so fast that our horses were almost cantering.

At an angle of the chasm I saw the long silver beard of the santon waving, and the bony limbs of his half-naked figure straining, as he worked like a madman, in disengaging and hurling down the basaltic columns to form a barrier between us and the foe. We passed, and, on looking back, I saw him insert the lever between two vast masses of basalt; then came a crash, as if an earthquake had rent the mountain, and a mighty ruin of rock and earth descended like a curtain in our rear, closing up *that avenue* for ever, and forming an impenetrable barrier between us and the Bedouins.

Their yells were hushed in a moment, and we heard no sound but our own hard breathing and the rapid clank of our horses' hoofs.

"Good Heaven!" said Fred, "has that old fanatic buried himself to save us?"

Kior grew pale at the idea, for the Santon Nouredin was all but a god in Yemen; but we had no time for reflection, as we were not without fear that the whole of this Cyclopean edifice might descend upon us, or that, perhaps, it might not have another outlet than that which the hermit had closed.

As Langley hinted something of this kind, a perspiration burst over me, and a pang shot through my heart; but as Kior said that the lamp was failing us, most of the oil having been spilled, *we continued* to press on, after reloading our arms and examining our horses' knees.

In a minute after, the Abdala uttered a cry.

The lamp had gone out!

The darkness of the grave was around us, and my horse reared so fiercely that I feared he would break my legs, or his own, and all my strength was required to hold down his head. To be brief: after nearly half-an-hour more of anxious and arduous groping through that dark and wonderful chasm, breaking our shins every minute against pieces of rock, and cutting our hands upon jagged fragments of crystals and spars, a faint glimmer became discernible before us. It brightened fast, and was reflected on the slimy walls of the grotto,

or passage; then we could see, but far off, as at the bottom of the well, a sunny haze, and green leaves waving; then we could find whereon to place our feet with confidence; and at last, with our hearts beating joyfully, we issued from an arch in the side of the rocky hills, fringed round by wild vines and thorny mimosa trees, to find ourselves in a green and beautiful valley, in the blaze of a cloudless morning sun, which tinged with the hue of burnished gold the jagged summits of those volcanic cliffs *under* which we had passed, and which now rose like a mighty barrier between us and the enemy—hills so steep and high, that the Bedouins would have to ride at least twenty miles before they could turn their flank and reach the valley.

We had been some hours in traversing this cavern, and our feet and hands were in a woful condition by cuts and bruises; but we were most concerned for the knees of our nags, which had received several wounds and scrapes.

Kior found some green leaves, like those of the acanthus, and bruising them to a pulp, applied it to the legs of the horses, and from this application they seemed to receive immediate relief.

"And now," said he, "I must leave you, for I shall have many a mile to ride before I can overtake our Emir Mohamed on the frontier of Shugra. You see the smoke which curls yonder in the sunshine, from amid a grove of palms," he added, pointing down the beautiful and luxuriant valley, to where I could distinguish, among the tall and graceful date trees, a number of white cottage walls and black dusky tents—"there lies the village of the good Sheikh Abdulmelik; and now, O nakibs, you are safe, and it is time that Ibn Kogia was beside his master."

"My brave fellow," said I, full of admiration and gratitude, as I drew out my purse, "how shall we reward your faith—your bravery in our service?"

"By leaving for ever the land of the Abdali, with all your soldiers and great cannon. I am an Arab of the Arabs," he added, disdainfully, as he pushed my purse aside, and sprang into his crimson saddle; "had I the riches of Khoosroo the Persian, I would give them all to see the land of my fathers freed from the Faringis! But alas and bismillah! the poor son of Ishmael hath only his heart and his spear!"

I was about to make another essay, but the soul of Kior Ibn Kogia was above a reward so pitiful: he let the reins fall on the neck of his fleet horse, waved aloft his round buckler and long tasseled spear, as he sprang from our side like an arrow from a bow.

In one minute, he was out of our sight.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SHEIKH ABDULMELIK.

THE morning sun was bright, the sky, as usual, without a cloud, and every herb and flower, rock and tree, were glittering in the silver dew of the night that had passed away. Near a blue stream that wound over yellow sands and among light green foliage, we saw upon a gentle slope the village of Abdulmelik, which consisted of a few white-walled cottages and many black canvas tents or wild-looking wigwams. Close to these grazed the flocks of his tribe. The village or camp—for it partook of both—was about half a mile distant, and as we rode down from the hills, crossed the stream, and trotted up, our spirits rose, and, after the excitement of the past night, we felt almost happy.

“‘Pon my honour, I don’t half like this kind of work !” said Fred. “You are better read in Arabic than I am, Hilton, and may understand the queer ways of these copper-coloured devils ; but I must own that, to me, whose ideas of the East are based on the memories of the lively lady, who was shut up in the glass box by her husband the giant—the spouse and the parrot—the young King of the Black Isles, whose nether man was made of black marble—the three calenders and the five ladies of Bagdad—Prince Ahmed and the sweet fairy Pari Banou—this reality is anything but pleasant. However, I suppose we shall have ‘Arabia’ on our colours, as well as Her Majesty’s 65th, or 2nd York North Riding, which will be very consolatory to our friends should they never hear of us again.”

As Fred never reflected very long on any subject, and as I did not propound anything in reply, he stroked the mane of his horse, and broke into a scrap of a hunting song, the burden of which was,

“Old fellow, hold on—head up, and hand low,
Over ditch, and smash through the hot-house we go !
For when saddle galls sore, and the spurs his sides goad,
The high-mettled racer’s a hack on the road.

Yoick ! Sing hey fal de ral, tally-ho ! tally-ho !”

I was very well pleased when the stream was placed between us and those whom I expected to appear every moment on the rocky ridge of hills that rose in our rear ; but no white turbans or bright lance-heads arose between their outline and the clear blue sky ; and with no small anxiety—on *my* part, at least, for Fred Langley was the most heedless of all thoughtless fellows—we drew near the village of the Sheikh Abdulmelik, *i.e.*, “the Servant of the King.”

The sun was shining with dazzling splendour on its little dwellings, and on the luxuriant foliage which overshadowed them. With a few houses which were roughly built of hewn stones, covered by a terrace, or flat roof, and rising above each other like steps on the

green sisepe of the verdant valley, the village consisted chiefly of coarse black tents and mud hovels, thatched with grass and clustered round the tomb of a santan. For doors and windows they had only square openings, hung with curtains or coarse mats, and the hum of gathering voices mingled with the bellowing of camels, the neighing of horses, and the bleating of sheep, as we entered.

Doubtful what manner of Mussulmen we were, by the fairness of our complexions, the length of our stirrups, and the fashion of our swords, the dark-looking men crowded about us noisily, and with a mingled expression of hostility and inquisitiveness in their quick eyes. The women had all their faces unveiled, and their fine black orbs were smiling with a kinder interest and wonder.

Some of the men were beginning to hoot and handle their weapons, when I resolutely brandished a cocked pistol, and demanded to be shown the residence of the Sheikh, and we had not been led twenty yards when we found ourselves before it.

It was one of the flat-roofed houses; and at its door we found the venerable chief, in accordance with the custom of ages, on his knees at prayer, with his face turned towards Mecca. In respect for his rank, his reverend aspect, and present occupation, we dismounted and held our horses by the bridle until his orisons were ended, before which we had a good opportunity of observing him. He was muffled in one of those shawls of Bagdad cloth, which are striped alternately with red and white; his eyes were full of expression and vivacity; his eyebrows were thick and protruding, and his beard hung down in a broad volume of silver, that reached to his girdle, and almost covered the carved ivory hilt of his jambea. Prayer over, he arose, and after gazing at us for a moment, in keen scrutiny, he made a profound salaam.

"Peace be unto you," said he.

"Unto you be peace," I replied, in the usual manner.

"Under God's protection, who are ye?" he asked.

"This letter from the Emir Mohamed al Raschid will show," said I, drawing from my breast my missive of credence.

"Good; the Abdala is the friend of old Abdulmelik," replied the sheikh, as he hastily read over the document, which he kissed, and then passed a high eulogium on the valour and virtues of the young emir, whom he affectionately called "his son." He led us into an apartment which was cool and pleasant, for the hangings of the open windows were dark, and the perfume of the morning flowers was wafted through them. The walls were plastered with white stucco, and on the four sides were painted, in green Arabic characters, a startling verse from the third chapter of the Koran.

"Whosoever followeth any other religion than Islam, shall not be accepted, and in the next life he shall be of those who perish!"

Soft carpets with cushions were spread around the chamber with amber pipes on them, and vases of fresh flowers stood between

Here we deposited our valises and bolsters, for we left our horses with their harness only, to the care of the Arabs; and here a repast was laid before us, for, fortunately, the venerable Abdulmelik had not yet breakfasted.

He was the husband of only one wife. She was now fifty years old and wrinkled to the last degree, but then the good sheikh had never loved any other. Their seven sons had all been slain in battle by the Futhalis, but a number of black-eyed grandchildren peeped at us from time to time through a brass-wire grating, which opened into another apartment. For these little Arabs, Fred drew a number of race-horses and four-in-hand drags on the blank leaves of my note-book, and by doing so, quite won the heart of the white-bearded patriarch.

After hearing my account of our pursuit and escape from Sheikh Ibrahim, he replied, "It was very daring of him to come so near my village, for he knoweth well that for each of his spears I have ten, and for each of his matchlocks, twenty. Had he crossed those mountains, few of his people had ever returned to Roba el Khaly. He is a wretch so avaricious, that he would not throw a bone, even to the dog of the Seven Sleepers."

Our repast consisted of kischer, a hot infusion of coffee-beans, camels' milk and butter, which was served to each of us in coarse clay cups by women who were unveiled, as Fred hinted, because they had nothing worth concealing. We had also slices of wheaten bread and millet-cake, with honey. This, with a pipe, was our breakfast, after which the sheikh dipped his hands in a laver of water, for the strict Mussulman immerses his face and digits five times daily, and immediately after every meal, a necessary ablution in a land where, as yet, knives, and forks, and gloves are in the lap of futurity.

We were to march for Sana after noon had passed, and the sheikh said, that as the Futhalis, the Bedouins, and the Arabs of Kaa-el-Bun, lay between us and the capital, he would escort us in person, with at least two hundred mounted men. As our funds were limited to what the regimental paymaster had advanced, and as we had no means of replenishing them until our return to the garrison, I was somewhat alarmed at the prospect of maintaining two squadrons of cavalry, and frankly said so to the sheikh; he laughed, and replied that the land through which we marched, would provide food, and he would be amply compensated by the generous Vizier Rabd al Hoosi, for conveying two ambassadors to the footstool of the Imaum. Moreover that, mounted and accoutred as we were, we would not find he had a lance too many in his escort, as Christians were not at all times allowed to ride on either horses or camels in the kingdom of Yemen. The sheikh now made every preparation for the march, by cleaning the blade of his long Arab sword, loading his pistols, and accurately examining his harness, several of the buckles and straps of which he repaired with his own

hand, saying to us with a smile, "I never rely on another for doing that which I can do for myself."

After a dinner of soup, stewed mutton, and hulwah, or sweetmeats, which were served upon little trays to each of us, and placed upon a small tripod stool beside each person, we discussed a jar of very good wine. Abdulmelik allowed his wife to eat with us, but politely apologized for doing so, saying that she was his "Lily of delight, and nutmeg of comfort; that he had married her, not for her beauty, but because she was skilful in casting bullets and making bread."

"This jolly old sheikh drinks like a rector," said Fred.

"Of course; in obedience to the Koran," said I.

"How! I thought it forbade wine, in this world—at least?"

"But we may take whatever is good for us, and doubtless the sheikh considers that wine is good for him."

Abdulmelik asked me a number of questions concerning the settlement at Aden by the *Ingleez*, to whom he seemed not over partial; but I gained a great step in his favour by acquainting him that I was not one of the *Ingleez*, but came from a kingdom that lay to the north of them; which had of old its own Imaums, and had yet its own laws and religion, in both of which it differed as much from the said *Ingleez* as any two nations of Frangistan could do, and added, that it was the country from whence came the gallant Ibrahim Aga, who was commander of the Mamelukes and Governor of Medina under the late Pacha of Egypt.*

He then asked me a number of questions concerning this country, which lay to the north of the *Ingleez*, who he always conceived to have lived in ships; whether our women were handsome, moonfaced and round hipped, and how much they sold for a-head; if we forged good swords and bred fine horses.

"Is it true that your jockeys can charm them by looking into their mouths, as I have seen some of the *Ingleez* do at Mocha?—and can they tell whether they are enchanted by the brown rings on their teeth?"

To save explanations, I answered that it was quite true.

"Wallah, your jockeys must beat the sorcerers of Oman!" said the sheikh.

His wife then asked me if we permitted our women to eat with us, and if we took off our turbans to them in the street; and, on my replying in the affirmative, she screamed with laughter till I was ashamed of the admission.

"Do your men and women sit in the mosque together?"

"Invariably."

"But have they not other ideas in their heads than holy ones, on seeing so many women unveiled?"

* This was Thomas Keith, a private of the 72d, or Albany Highlanders, and son of a gunsmith in Edinburgh.

"Sometimes," replied Fred; "I have known a very happy marriage result from a love-making in church."

"The Kafirs! — marriage — what desecration!" muttered the sheikh. Many other questions followed, for he was very inquisitive about this kingdom, which lay so far on the verge of the world, as to be beyond even the *Ingleez*; but all my answers seemed so improbable, that, fearing to be deemed a mere coiner of fables, I left Fred to reply, and, *certainly*, he gave such an account of it, by mingling truth with absurdity, as made the old sheikh's eyebrows bristle with astonishment.

"Do they live in tents or houses?"

"In houses, built like great castles," said Fred; "some of them are twenty stories high; they always commence to build at the chimney pots, and so work downwards to the foundations."

"God is great! Are the roofs flat like ours, for sleeping on in hot weather?"

"There is no hot weather there — nothing but mist" ("as I may remember," added Fred, parenthetically, "when I had a few weeks' shooting in Lorn.")

"What! doth not the sun shine in that country?"

"Oh no," replied Fred, lighting his chibouque, "the moon only, and a very dim one too! My friend never saw the sun till he landed at Aden."

"Allah ackbar!" ejaculated the sheikh, "is the dark country of these Kafirs an island?"

"No, but it is surrounded by walls of enormous height, having many gates."

"Do they worship idols?"

"Yes," replied Fred; "many of them adore a certain spirit called Mammon, and a golden calf, too,—a worship in which many of my own countrymen, the *Ingleez*, devoutly join at times."

The sheikh, who understood everything literally, took his pipe from his mouth in amazement.

"What is this thou tellest me, O Kafir? A calf! is it like that which was cast by Al Sameri, who made it from the rings and bracelets of gold and silver, which the Israehtes borrowed, after their own fashion, from the Egyptians?"

Fred, without a moment's hesitation, declared that it was the very identical calf, and this spirit, which was generally worshipped in secret and reviled in public, was a useful one withal, as it aided the Kafirs of the island to make those smoking ships which come on wheels to the sea of Kolzom, to make roads and bridges of iron, and chariots which were drawn by twenties at a time at the tail of a screaming iron horse, whose speed was so great that an arrow, shot from the strongest bow, could not overtake him.

It was now Fred's turn — when he told the truth — to be looked upon as a "father of fables."

"Wallah," said the simple-minded sheikh; "either thou liest, C

Faringi, or it is a land of magicians, who beat the enchanters of Oman in our day, and those of Pharaoh in the times of old! Neither Ghadur, Jaatin, nor Mosfa, with all their wonder-working rods, could achieve such miracles, though they could turn their staffs into barking serpents, which guarded them while they slept."

Indeed the Sheikh Abdulmelik would have believed anything we chose to tell him, for he was as credulous as the Sultan of Malwa, who five times gave fifty thousand tungas for the *five* hoofs of the ass on which our Saviour rode into Jerusalem.

Amid such conversation noon passed; the time for departure arrived, and we gave a last look at our pistols and horses. The sheikh's wife brought him a pair of short riding-boots and his fur riding cloak, and respectfully received from him his pipe and slippers. Then he kissed her withered cheek, hooked on his sword, and we came forth, to find the whole population of the straggling village assembled to see the cavalcade, but chiefly us, depart.

The sheikh took his lance from the turf where it was usually stuck before the door; this was the signal for mounting, and two hundred active and swarthy fellows, dressed in red turbans, with blue shirts and parti-coloured shawls, and all armed with tufted lances and long matchlocks, many of which were inlaid with silver, targets, daggers, maces, and swords, mounted their horses or camels; and I observed that the best accoutred generally rode dromedaries, a smaller species of the same animal, but having two humps.

Beneficent nature has admirably fitted those uncouth animals for travelling over the vast plains and arid deserts of Arabia, where they can proceed for six and even eight days without water, carrying six hundredweight as an ordinary load; of this we are assured both by Sandys and Major Rennell. This load is never removed on a journey, as they kneel down at night, and repose with their burden unstrapped; while their stomachs are so peculiarly formed, that they can retain water, and from time to time gurgle it up into their hot and parched throats.

The French army, during their campaign in Egypt, had a dromedary regiment, which was able to perform as many evolutions as a corps of dragoons; when attacked, it formed a hollow square, and the dromedaries knelt down to form a breastwork before their riders, who dismounted to defend this living rampart with their muskets and bayonets; and their speed made them of the greatest service in pursuing or retreating. In the history of Morocco, we are told of a young Arab who travelled from Mogadore to that city and *back again* in one day, to procure some oranges for his mistress, a beautiful girl, who was sick, and whom he loved passionately. Morocco is one hundred and twenty-five miles from the sea; thus, between dawn and sunset, this brave lover travelled two hundred and fifty miles on his swift *heirie* to gratify the longings of his lady. The gates were shut at night, when he reached the walls of Souerah, but he sent the oranges to Zenobia by one of the soldiers who guarded the barriers.

Our journey occupied two or three days, as we took it very easily, and the good sheikh wished to show us the splendid scenery and foliaged landscapes of a land "where," as he said, "the sun shone." We halted wherever the heat of noon or the shade of night found us, spread our carpets, lit a fire and our pipes; told or heard stories of the magic mirror of King Giamschid, which showed all things; or of the giant Og, the son of Anak, who escaped the Flood by swimming till the waters subsided; and then we would doze over hot coffee and roasted dates, while our horses were picketted beside us, and the camels fed on barley cakes and a handful of beans, or nibbled the tender branches of the tamarisk, the green stems of the jowrie, or the hard, prickly, spear-headed plants that grew in the sandy plain.

As the Sheikh Abdulmelik, though brave as a lion, was a peaceful old man, and no way desirous of coming to blows if he could avoid it, he made various detours to avoid the tribes and towns whose people were predatory or quarrelsome. Thus we passed within view of Djobla, or Job-el-ala, the capital of a little principality, and saw little more than the smoke of its soap manufactories and the white walls of its palace, where, the sheikh said, the Princess Giuhara lived—a cruel but beautiful woman (of whom more anon); and now we found ourselves among peasantry, all of whom had their heads closely shaven.

We saw Abb, a small town clustered on the summit of a mountain, surrounded by a strong wall, and behind its broken outline the morning sun was rising clear and brightly; then Jerim, with all its flat-roofed houses, nestling under a rock, which is crowned by the Turkish castle of its dola or governor.

At Damar, in the mountains, near which the Arabs find the Ayek-yemani or red cornelian, on which they set such value, we were followed through the streets by noisy crowds, who hooted and threw mud at us, "as dogs, Franks, and Kafirs!" This is a large town defended by a well-built fortress; it has a college of Zeites, several mosques, bazaars, and khans; but to halt there was impossible, for one of the Zeites, as we passed along the principal thoroughfare, threw thrice in my face a handful of *al zakum*, the almond-shaped fruit of a bitter and thorny tree, which is considered accursed, for tradition avers that Mahomet transplanted it from Arabia to hell; and each time the malicious Zeite cried, while the people applauded, "May this, O dog, be thy food for ever!"

The *third* time my face smarted sorely. I lost all patience, and by one blow of my whip across his face levelled the fanatic on the pavement. It was a rash deed: a yell rose from the people, and stones were thrown; but our escort brandished their spears, unslung their matchlocks; we soon got clear of the place, and ere nightfall saw before us the walls of Sana.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CITY OF THE IMAUM.

ENTERING a broad and stony valley, the barren area of which was encircled by an amphitheatre of green and lofty mountains, we saw before us the capital city of Yemen, encircled by its walls, having innumerable turrets, with the domes of its twenty mosques glittering in the morning sun, which imparted to them a golden and purple radiance that formed a pleasant contrast to the streets of snow-white plaster, and to the brilliant green of those luxuriant orchards and gardens which cover the great slope that Sana crowns, and border the banks of the Shab, a river which takes its source near the steep Mount Nikkum. This hill overshadows the town, at an elevation, which is said by some to be four thousand feet above the level of the Red Sea; however, that has little to do with my story.

While our long and picturesque cavalcade of two hundred turbaned Arabs, with their slender lances and round bucklers glittering in the sun, wound, in double file on their horses, camels, and dromedaries, down the valley, its white stony sides seemed to vibrate and palpitate in the morning beams as they poured between the fresh green mountain peaks in flaky showers of light and haze.

Fred and I rode by the side of our protector, the Sheikh Abdulmelik, and he related such stories of the sultan's tyranny and barbarity, as made us by no means sanguine of success in our mission, and we could not refrain from expressing our desire that the duty was over, and that we were once more safe among the fine fellows of "the Queen's Own," at Aden.

As we drew near the principal gate of this large and wealthy city, which is considered one of the handsomest in Asia, and is averred, by some travellers, to be larger than Bristol, from the space occupied by its bazaars, gardens, baths, and fountains, the picturesque aspect of its long and shady avenue of lime and palm trees was enlivened in one place by a long caravanladen with coffee, dried fruit, and raisins, departing for Mocha, under a guard of nearly three hundred armed Arabs; but the scene was darkened in other places by the hideous remains of several unfortunates, who had been impaled by the road-side and by the many grisly heads that grinned from the ramparts. Though bricks and mud, hardened and baked in the sun, are the material of which these defences are principally composed, they are of great strength and enormous thickness, as Dreghorn's gunners afterwards found; and I remember that an old topographer, *Sanson*, mentions, that in his time, the walls of Sana measured ten cubits in height, with towers of twenty.

The Sultan Solyman, called frequently the Inaum, or King of Yemen, is the most influential of the Arab princes, and the erection of his power is coeval with the downfall of the Turkish authority, in

1630, when his ancestor, Khassim the Great, descended with his warriors from the hills of Loheia, that look down on the Sea of Kalzom, and freed all Yemen from the tyrannical sway of the Ottoman Pachas. Since then, the throne of Sana has been hereditary in the family of Solyman, whose whole kingdom is well organized, for each city has its kadi; each village its sheikh, each district its dola; each port its emir bahr, or inspector, and he maintains a royal body-guard of one thousand horse and four thousand foot, commanded by sheikhs of rank; and we had no small trouble in overcoming the scruples and satisfying the cupidity of a party of the soldiers who guarded the gate—and savage-looking fellows they were; but all uniformly accoutred, with bucklers, sabres, lances, and slung matchlocks. I cannot add that they were uniformly clad, as they only wore cloths round their loins, and turbans on their close-shaven crowns.

The sun of noon was at its height when we entered the town, through a gate defended by brass cannon; the people were all within doors, and the narrow streets, in which were many handsome and massive houses of stone and of brick, khans and caravanserais of carved and painted wood, with windows of stained venetian glass, seemed quite deserted; and we saw none abroad save a few houseless beggars who loitered under the arched peristyles of the mosques; and undeterred by our formidable escort, reviled us bitterly on discovering who we were, by saying,

“Wallah! why should we who are true believers be on foot and in rags, while those beardless Kafirs are on horseback, and clad in fine garments? Is this just, O Mahmoud resoul Allah?”

With the sheikh and his retinue we rode straight to the principal caravanserai, a large square building of brick, in the centre of which was a spacious court, surrounded by an arched piazza supported on columns of wood, painted green. Under this arcade ran a long seat like the *terre pleine* of a ravelin; on this a number of travellers and dealers in coffee, raisins, silks, &c., were sitting and smoking their pipes in silence, with their camels or horses near them. In the centre a beautiful marble fountain, surrounded by pots of brilliant flowers, threw up its water in pure jets of crystal.

Here were no powdered waiters dressed in accurate black, with white vests and matchless ties, full of officious alacrity; no blooming chambermaids, with pretty caps and winning smiles; no portly landlord with his amplitude of waistcoat to bow beneficently, while the ostlers unstrap the imperial from the carriage top, and bring your port nanteau and hat-box from under the rumble. Every one was left to shift for himself, and to groom his own cattle.

The apartments for those who wished them were over the entrance, and to these Fred and I immediately repaired, while the sheikh and his train, who in the Eastern fashion had brought in with them all their provender for horse and man, squatted themselves under the arcade, lit their pipes, and praised the prophet they were there.

The charity of the Mohammedan has erected those inns for the reception of strangers; and there even the accursed Jew and the infidel are safe from insult or pillage, for the injunctions of the Koran on the score of hospitality, have imparted somewhat of a sacred character to the caravanserai, and in many places the keepers are loth to admit unmarried men, being of opinion that he who is without a wife, is a more dangerous guest than he who has one or more.

However, we were not long in Sana before Fred Langley was in a fair way to have the reputation of being a safe gentleman lodger in any caravanserai under the sun.

To refresh us after our long ride, we were bathed, anointed, rubbed, shampooed, and so attained that delightful sensation of coolness which an Eastern bath can only impart; and as we left the place with our loaded pistols in our girdles, and our swords buckled on (for it was unsafe to relinquish our arms for a moment), our kind old friend the sheikh brought us a written protection from the grand vizier, who, he informed us, was the most pious Mussulman in the kingdom, and had just gone to the mosque; but would receive us on the morrow, as the sultan was absent, sunning his imperial person in the smiles of the beautiful slave at his Castle of the Graces; meantime, that we had full leave to visit every part of the capital, while in possession of this missive, which was signed *Rabd-al-Hoosi*, and would afford us every protection.

Armed with this new, and, in such a place, most necessary credential (for the hatred of the Franks extended far beyond Aden), we set forth for a ramble, and idled away an hour or two among those immense bazaars, which were the true precursors of the Great Industrial Exhibitions, of which we now hear so much, and endured less annoyance from the people than many of our officers have had from our allies at Constantinople. As we were returning—

"What the deuce can that fellow want with us?" said Fred, pointing to an Arab, who had been narrowly observing and following us from place to place.

"A thief, probably."

"Nay, he looks rather too respectable for that. Speak to him, Frank."

This Arab, who wore a plain cotton gown with wide sleeves all of spotless white, tied with a red silk scarf, in which he wore a fine Persian sabre, a blue cotton turban with red, green and yellow ends approached us, on seeing that we observed him; and making a profound reverence, announced himself as "a slave merchant."

Fred burst into a loud laugh, which made the Arab's grey moustaches—he was middle-aged—bristle with anger; but being less needless, I said, with cold politeness, that "we did not require any servants."

"It is not servants, eunuchs, or water-carriers that I have now for sale," replied the merchant, with another salaam; "but if my lord wished to purchase a damsel, I could show him a pure virgin,

who in beauty is not to be surpassed by the most beautiful woman in the seraglio of the sultan; nay, not by that boasted slave, who is believed to have enchanted him."

Curiosity, pity, and contempt, were the emotions I felt at this announcement; Fred smiled knowingly, and said to me with a wink,

"Are you inclined to invest a small sum in this jockey's cattle?"

"Not very likely," said I.

"Pon my honour, I should like to see the girl he speaks of, and know what he asks for her. It is worth while learning how such ware usually sells."

"Shall we go, then?"

"With pleasure. Come along; tell the old fellow to lead the way. What a joke!"

"She is a miracle of loveliness," resumed the dealer, as we walked on together; "and even the Sublime Porte hath nothing like her at Istamboul. Her skin is fair, pure, and white, as the egg of an ostrich; her hair is black as night, and thick and massy; her eyes are brighter than the gems of Golcondah."

"This fellow sets off his goods like a Newmarket jockey," said I; "but with a most insinuating sing-song."

"She tells tales like the beautiful Scheherazade," continued the dealer, "and plays the lute like Isaac of Bagdad; but you shall judge, O my lords, for yourselves."

"I am all impatience to see this divine odalisque," said Fred; "I have my purse with me; yes, all right."

"You have quite got over your fancy for the emir's sister."

"Well, I think I have. Poor girl! Where would be the use of moping about her? But here we are; what an odd looking shop it is!"

Fred, a matter-of-fact fellow, and thorough man of the world, had no other idea in going to see this girl than merely that we were engaged in a frolic, which, with a few additions, would make a fine bouncing story for the mess; but other thoughts were in my mind, and all the memories of the "Arabian Nights," of Moorish maids of Granada, and all that I had read of the poetry and romance of the East,—tales of beautiful women and of wild or seducing adventure, were thronging fast upon me, as the merchant in his white flowing robe led us onward.

Opening with a copper key a door which was covered with elaborate brass ornaments, he ushered us into his house, and led us through several dark and narrow passages to a chamber which overlooked a gloomy little court, and the furniture of which consisted only of the usual cushions, carpets, and little stools, which are used as tables by the Arabs and Egyptians. Here he left us for a short time.

Across one end of the apartment hung a chintz curtain, which I supposed to conceal a bed-place, or inner chamber, and in this last conjecture I was correct.

CHAPTER XL.

AN ELIGIBLE INVESTMENT.

IN a few minutes the merchant re-appeared and drew back the curtain, beyond which appeared a small closet or alcove hung with crimson silk and lighted by a cupola, from which a flood of sunny lustre fell upon the unfortunate creature who was now exposed for sale, after a fashion such as Mrs. Stowe has never seen, or even conceived.

She was completely veiled in a large mellaye or cloak, but the merchant coarsely withdrew it, and then we were startled to see a beautiful Arab girl nearly nude; at least, she had around her only a thin white robe or cymar of muslin, so fine that it resembled a gossamer web; being so transparent that while it imparted, if possible, a greater whiteness to her beautiful form, the latter lost none of its adorable roundness, or curving outline.

The poor little maid strove to veil herself, and buried her face in her "quick small hands," and among the thick wavy masses of that long hair which contrasted so powerfully with the whiteness of her dazzling back and rounded shoulders, while she wept aloud at the cruel humiliation to which hard fate had subjected her.

Never was a more lovely form profaned by the eyes of man!

"Are you her father?" I sternly asked the merchant.

"No; she was taken in war by a hostile tribe, and I bought her from a sheikh in the plain of Mamaara. You may have her for one hundred and fifty zechins. She has not yet been taught to dance, but she can sing the sweet songs of Amrou and Hareth, and in the words of Zohair can tell of the wars of the tribes of old, and the deeds of their valiant men, who have long since gone to the joys of paradise."

The girl sobbed violently, and the glass fell from Langley's quizzical eye. We felt pained by this degrading exhibition, and were about to withdraw, a movement which made the eyes of the armed dealer flash fire (for he rightly conjectured that we had merely been gratifying our curiosity), when the voice of the poor captive arrested us, and Langley changed colour.

"Amina!" he cried, springing forward, while the startled merchant laid a hand on his brass pistol.

She looked up, hope, surprise, and shame, all mingling in her fine black eyes, as she asked,

"Who called me Amina? Oh—the friends of my brother Mohamed! You have eaten bread and salt with him at Jebel Ahmer—save me—save me from this man!" She stretched her fine arms towards us imploringly, and the merchant, who became more and more alarmed by this unexpected recognition, wrapped the mellaye round her.

"Fellow, where was it you stole this girl?" I asked, grasping also the butt of a pistol.

"Stole? I am an honest trader, and such a question was never asked of me before."

"Come—come; no trifling. Speak!"

"I bought her from four Futhalis in the plain of Mamaara. Wallah! but she has cost a world of trouble, for I never had a damsel so unwilling to be sold before, though in one day at Mocha I have sold a hundred by couples."

"Hark you," said I, "what punishment does the Koran tell us awaits those who lie, and those who will appear in the forms of swine at the last day?"

"I do not require a Nassari to inform me on those points," replied the merchant, sullenly.

"Then answer me truly; what did you pay to those villanous Futhalis?"

"Forty zechins, with two pairs of Indian pistols, and a package of tobacco—worth together about thirty more."

"A venetian zechin is worth about nine shillings; and you demanded one hundred and fifty! ample profit!"

"I am not in a hurry," said the merchant, leading the way towards the door; "hasty purchases are seldom worth the money we pay for them; but be assured it is not every day a damsel like this is offered to you for a sum so small."

"You are well aware, fellow," I continued, grasping in a threatening manner the handle of my riding whip, "that this girl is not a lawful prize, and could scarcely have been offered for sale to a Yemenee."

"She *is* a lawful prize! Are her people not the wild Abdali who rob the caravans of Oman?"

"By reporting this matter to the kadi, we might have you bastinadoed till your toes dropped off."

"The kadi would perhaps send her to the Castle of the Graces as an offering to the sultan, and we should all have our heads chopped off for having looked upon her. I have known such orders given by Solyman before now."

"We are friends of the grand vizier," said Fred, beginning to wax wrath, "and—and—;" but his Arabic failed him, and he eyed the dealer with a hostile aspect, while Amina continued to sob under the mantle which enveloped her.

To shorten the transaction, the merchant informed us that he was anxious to depart that night for Mocha, and would sell us the girl for forty zechins; so we closed the bargain at once. He sat down cross-legged, and with a slit cane wrote in the Arab fashion, the reverse way, a receipt in full, and Fred handed him twenty of our British guineas, which made forty shillings more than he was entitled to.

"Twenty guineas!" said Langley, as we loitered in the ante

room, waiting until Amina was brought to us; "twenty guineas for such a girl! By Jove, I have paid twenty times the sum for a very ordinary bit of horse-flesh!"

"Hush," said I, as we heard the tinkle of those anklets which the Arabian women wear; "here comes our purchase."

"Ours—*mine*, you mean," said Fred, as he merrily switched his wide pantaloons; "but if the regiment heard that our first proceeding on arriving in Sana was to buy this very captivating Odalisque, we should never have the end of it. I think I hear the lisp of De Lancy, the banter of O'Flannigan, and the shouts of O'Hara."

Enveloped in a mellaye of black silk striped with red, which covered her whole figure, head and face, leaving visible only the ends of her wide trowsers, which were gathered about her slender ankles by rings of flexible gold, and her white instep, which the pretty slipper of velvet partly hid, Amina was brought again before us by the merchant. She threw back the top of the mellaye, below which she had a thin muslin veil that revealed only the upper part of her face, and I shall never forget the volume of expression which filled her imploring eyes as she gazed upon us by turns. Timidity, hope, reliance and embarrassment, were all mingled in her manner, as she asked in a low voice—

"Who is my master?"

"None here, Amina," said I; "we are both your friends, and you shall be our mistress."

"Then who has bought me?" she asked bitterly.

"It was I," replied Fred, who seemed almost as frightened as herself.

"In pity then convey me back to Jebel Ahmer, to my brother, and he will repay you a thousandfold, with gratitude and with joy!"

"Speak to her, Frank," said Langley, "for upon my honour, her eyes confuse me."

I hastened to assure her, with the utmost sincerity, and with all the eloquence I was master of, that we—

"*We* again," grumbled Fred; "come, come, Frank—I hope the fellow has made out his receipt in *my* name."

—That we had freed her from the trader with no other view than to save her from insult; to protect and restore her to her brother that gallant emir, to whom, although an enemy, we owed so many favours, and from whom we had received so much attention and hospitality. I begged her to believe our plighted words, as honest men, though Christians, for this—for to have spoken to her of the faith or honour of British officers or gentlemen, would have sounded to her only as an unintelligible jargon.

"You have done a good action!" said Amina, clasping her pretty hands; "a great, a noble deed; and your better angel," she added to Fred, "will write it ten times down."

"I have no better angel than yourself, Amina," said he gallantly.

"Than I, alas ! I am only a woman. But thou hast one ever on thy right hand," she added, sinking her voice ; "and on thy left a bad and wicked angel ; Oh ! listen always to the whispers of the other."

"Odd this," muttered Fred ; "for in the way of signing bills, boxing, fencing, or fighting, all the mischief I do is achieved by my right hand."

"And whence do you convey me first ?" she asked, while her tears fell fast.

"To the caravanserai where we lodge ; there a chamber will be provided for you, and such attention shown as our own sister would receive."

"Adieu," said the merchant, under his thick white beard, as he ushered us into the narrow and gloomy street ; "adieu, and may your end and your omens be good."

In ten minutes after, we had Amina lodged safely in the caravan-serai, in an apartment not far from our own, and in the range of chambers which overlooked the gate. We sent the wife of the keeper to a bezestein, where silks, &c., were sold, to purchase a few suitable dresses and other habiliments for our ward. We then inquired for the good sheikh Abdulmelik, and were informed, that after receiving a present from the vizier Radd-al-Hoosi, he had departed with all his train, and thus we were left to our own devices in Sana.

This was somewhat perplexing intelligence, when we considered the distance and the dangers that lay between us and the regiment, and that our mission was not yet fulfilled.

Fearing there had been some mistake, we sent to the palace of Al Hoosi, to ask when we could be received ; and our messenger was informed that the vizier was again gone to mosque, to say his Salat al Moghreb, or fourth prayer in the evening, and that it was impossible we could be received before the following day.

CHAPTER XLI.

AMINA AGAIN.

AMINA was barely sixteen, but in the tropics the fulness of womanhood is attained even before that early age. When we visited her, she looked charming in the costume we had procured from the bezestein. She was seated on a pile of soft cushions, and on our entrance gracefully placed her fine hands on her breast, and timidly bowed to us.

Her little vest with its loose sleeves and row of minute pearl buttons, her trowsers of soft white cotton, girt about the waist by a cymar of the finest muslin, were all of the prettiest and most graceful fashion ; and after a time we prevailed upon her to lay aside

the veil, urging that it was not the custom for the women of Frangistan to conceal their faces from their friends; but such is the force of habit, that our little Arab blushed and trembled, like one committing a crime, as she withdrew the muslin screen.

We are generally averse to admit the great beauty of one whom we have heard highly extolled, and we find, or imagine that we find, the reality fall short of our previous conception; thus many a woman whom we have considered lovely from hearsay, has appeared plain on introduction; but had *you* seen Amina, the sister of the emir, you would have found realized in her all that we have heard of Oriental grace and loveliness.

Her face was soft and feminine, her lips were distinctly and beautifully formed; her shoulders, neck, and arms, which were displayed by the open fashion of her vest, and her feet and ankles which were stockingless, though encircled by gold bangles, were perfect symmetry, and now you must suppose the rest.

She was very sad, reserved, and timid; but being reassured by the respect with which we treated her, and the promises we reiterated, of conveying her back to Jebel Ahmer, her courage rose; her natural liveliness came forth, and then nothing could be more merry or winning than the bursts of laughter in which she indulged at times, especially at the mistakes of Fred, who *would* speak Arabic, and in his headlong efforts, courageously spoke gibberish when nothing better occurred to him; but I could soon perceive when he addressed her, how her cheek blushed, how her long eyelashes drooped, and her short upper lip quivered, as a sigh escaped; and ere long Master Frederick Langley detected all this too. The free, unfettered society of men, especially of men who treated her with such profound respect, was new and charming to her; for the Arabs are wont to treat their horses with greater regard and admiration than their women, who are considered little better than objects of barter, pleasure, or tribute.

The memory of the service and the trifling attention she had received at Jebel Ahmer had dwelt powerfully in her mind. Thus assisted by a warm and lively imagination, the young girl had conjured up a lover in the person of Langley; and though I rejoiced that by a singular chance, we had been the means of rescuing her from a life of degradation, perhaps of misery, and that we would ultimately restore her to her tribe and family, I foresaw something unpleasant in futurity; for with one so beautiful in our society daily, and a heart wholly unoccupied, it would be impossible for Fred Langley to remain ignorant of the conquest that awaited him.

We took our coffee and our sweetmeats with her, an act of condescension which astonished the keeper of the caravanserai; but he placed it, no doubt, to the account of our barbarous ignorance as Kafirs and Faringis.

I am assured that the callantry natural to Europeans, the delicate

attention to every trifle, and the thoughtful anticipation of every wish, which she received from us, must have made a deep impression on the simple but noble mind of this Arabian girl; and have formed a strong contrast to the manner of those men, to whom she had been hitherto accustomed.

We passed the whole evening with her, and though she was wholly unlettered and untaught, there was a charming simplicity, candour, and innocence, in all she said or did, and in all she thought; for in her ideas of the world she was a mere child, and knew of nothing beyond the hills and palms that bounded the valley of the Red Mountain.

"I must begin to teach this girl something," said Fred, when we returned to our own rooms; "but how the deuce am I to set about it?"

I burst into a fit of laughter.

"Hallo!" said he; "what is the matter?"

"Excuse me, but I was laughing at the idea of *you* turning tutor."

"Well, many a gentleman's son has done worse."

"She will be more likely to teach you a little Arabic, than to receive much of the Queen's English instead."

"She has taught me the Arabic for love, already," said he, making a pirouette.

"Well, what is it?"

"I meant in the language of the eyes. Oh! hers are glorious! What is it Byron says?"

"Don't know, really, he says so many good things."

"'Tis pleasant to be schooled in a strange tongue,
By female lips and eyes—this is, I mean,
When both the teacher and the taught are young."

"You understand? I have not quoted Byron since our last water-party, with Blanche Palmer and Letty Howard, on the Medway, and now here we are buying pretty girls in Sana; by Jove, what a change!"

These words brought the memory of Cecil back to my heart; a cloud came over my brow, and I could not repress a bitter sigh.

"What are you thinking of, Frank," asked my friend, after a pause.

"I was revolving all the means by which we might communicate with the old santon."

"The santon be hanged! I think one night with that fellow was more than enough!"

"Or with the Sheikh Abdulmelik, then?"

"For what purpose?"

"To send Amina home."

"You are in a remarkable hurry," said Fred, as he laid aside his sword and pistols: "the sheikh is a shabby old fellow, who left us

here, more abruptly than politely. No, no; we'll take the girl back ourselves. She is safer with us than with any one else. How infernally hot it is! Oh! for a bottle of our prime mess claret, out of the iced cooler!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE VIZIER OF SANA.

NEXT morning we breakfasted with our beautiful charge (I had almost said, purchase) and found her more conversable and enchanting than ever; but leaving her when the shrill voice of the muezzin rang from the minaret of a neighbouring mosque, to say her prayers to the Kebab, and crave from Fatima, daughter of the Prophet, that protection and incession which Catholics seek from the Virgin Mary, we repaired to the house of the vizier, and were again informed that he was at the mosque.

"The devil!" said I, impatiently; "this fellow is never out of the mosque, I think!"

"He is pious as the holy Prophet, and fasts like the santon Noureddin," said the keeper of the caravanserai, who had acted as our guide, and partly understood my remark by the angry expression of my eye. "During the thirty days of Ramadan, between the first appearance of the two new moons, he abstains from all food, drink, perfumes, and bathing, from sunrise to sunset, and even should the hot wind of the desert be blowing, he will not touch so much as the tip of his tongue with the smallest drop of water, even were it no larger than the eye of a midge; neither will he comb his beard (though he usually inters the combings thereof every morning) nor will he look upon his wives, though they are said to be beautiful as the Hur al Oyu of Paradise. Allah! he is quite a miracle of a man, our vizier, Rabd-al-Hoosi!"

"Such a model of abstinence and piety will give but a cold reception to such a Kafir as you, Fred," said I, "for you have a comical turn in your eye that these Mussulmen don't like."

"But you must soften him with a verse of the Koran. Come, shall we go to the mosque and meet him there?"

"As you please—let us go then."

Zepporah, the wife of the caravanserai keeper, was very inquisitive to know who Amina was, and why we treated her with so much respect.

"She is not your wife, of course," she said to Fred.

"No."

"Is she your slave, then?"

"No."

"Sister?"

"Then in the name of the Prophet what is she?"

"Just whatever you please, old lady," said Fred, in his off-hand way; but I gave the woman a piece of gold, for I dreaded her officious tongue raising some clamour against us, as it is not lawful for Kafirs to purchase, or have about them, female slaves in Yemen, and this may seem somewhat odd to those who only know the East through the free and easy mode of Indian military life.

A few minutes walking brought us to the mosque of the Imaum Solymán, the ample size of which promised a magnificent interior.

"Will it please you to leave your slippers here, effendi?" said our guide.

"Effendi!" repeated Fred, as reluctantly he drew off his boots; "well, 'pon my honour, that sounds immensely better than our plain esquire, or plainer *mister*—Frederick Powerscourt Langley, *Effendi*, 'Queen's Own'; I'll sign my next draft so on Cox and Co."

Leaving our boots at the door, but keeping our heads covered, we entered the mosque, for the magnificence of which I was in no way prepared.

Rising from horse-shoe-shapen Moorish arches that sprung from more than eighty gilded columns, the roof was of great height, and like all these oval arches, was painted in the most brilliant colours; from the apex of every arch hung a splendid lamp of silver; while the lustre in the mehrab, or secret oratory, was of pure gold. As the chastened light stole through the openings in the lofty dome at distant intervals, a solemn gloom pervaded the vast vista of arcades that vanished off in dim perspective, whichever way we turned; and on every arabesqued panel, and the rich impost of every pointed arch, were sentences of the Koran inscribed in brilliant green and shining gold. On the north, and enclosed by seven gates of glittering brass—symbolical of the seven heavens and the seven paths thereto—was an aisle where stood the marble fountains for the purpose of ablution; around them grew orange and citron trees, with gorgeous flowers in gilded vases, while shoals of gold and silver fish played amid the bright and gushing water. To these fountains admission was given by the silver portal of pardon.

In the centre, under oval arches, painted in the most brilliant arabesques of gold and sacred green, black and red, and under a niche, the roof of which was a vast scallop-shell of burnished gold, studded with precious stones, and lighted by golden lamps, which shed delicious perfumes, was the maksura, whereon lay the Koran, on a table of the purest crystal.

Afraid we were intruding and risking insult, Fred and I remained somewhat aloof, yet imitating those about us by crossing our hands on our breasts, placing them behind our ears, and so forth; while our guide prostrated himself on the mosaic pavement, along which dim lines of wavering light stole from the golden lamps of the central shrine, while all between was gloomy obscurity, but producing a most beautiful effect; and before this light, which indicated the direction

Of the Prophet's city, a group of turbaned believers were kneeling in prayer, without the rail of fretted silver that enclosed Al Mehrab round. These were the vizier, Rabd-al-Hoosi, and the officers of his household.

I knew Rabd by the magnificent diamond which shone on the top of his turban, and for the possession of which he was celebrated, as it was the sultan's gift; but all his attire otherwise was plain; for like a good Mussulman, he never addressed himself to heaven in sumptuous apparel, lest he should be deemed guilty of pride and arrogance.

He finished repeating aloud the first chapter of the Koran as we entered, and then resting his hands upon his knees, with his body bent forward, he cried, with a loud voice, "Allah Ackbar!" and all his train responded. He went through seven positions of the body, with an invocation at each, and then told over his rosary of ninety beads, making a distinct ejaculation as each dropped through his fingers; he then stroked his beard thrice, and thrice said "Praise be to God!" and I felt very much inclined to say the same thing when his tedious orisons were over.

I was much impressed, however, by the piety of this good Mussulman, and augured well of the coming interview, if he did not prove a bigot. As he came forth from the mosque, preceded by his katib and pipe-bearer, we placed ourselves in a sufficiently conspicuous place to attract his attention; but whether he was puffed up with earthly vanity, or had his eyes fixed on something beyond our sublunary sphere, I know not; he never deigned to look on us, but mounted his richly caparisoned horse, and surrounded by a party of lancers of the sultan's guard, rode hastily off.

He seemed a strongly-built man, and very fair complexioned for an Arab, with a square face, and quick, cunning grey eyes, an enormous beard, of a chestnut colour, shaggy eyebrows, and a hooked nose; his appearance was not very prepossessing, yet all the people bowed before him with the most abject humility. We had to follow him to his house. It stood near the great bezestein, and was a plain square edifice, having a multitude of pinnacles and grotesque stucco ornaments along the edge of the roof, the successive decorations of several viziers of Sana, all of whom had been beheaded, bowstrung, or blown from a mortar, until the present one, who had been raised to that great office from obscurity, and had held it for the wonderful period of fifteen years, by his skill at court, his cunning in the divan, and his courage in the field.

Along the front projected a wooden balcony, on which the small and irregular windows opened; those of the sitting rooms were glazed by venetian glass, or by the transparent crystals from the mountains. By well-armed slaves, some of whom were tongueless mutes, or beardless eunuchs, we were ushered along a narrow passage and up a steep but beautifully arabesqued staircase, roofed by an open lantern, and shown into an apartment furnished with the usual

couches, cushions, and carpets, pipes, vases, and flowers. The walls were decorated by arras from Anatolia, festooned shawls, and large Cashmerian kerchiefs, by stars of matchlocks, cimitars, daggers, pistols, lances, bucklers, and the old horse-tailed standard of the Turkish Timariots. Here the katib, or secretary of the vizier, a most venerable and benign old Arab, informed us that "his excellency would soon appear."

Soon after Rabd-al-Hoosi came in, wearing a large benish, or upper cloak of yellow cloth, over a gown of brilliant silk which was girt by a Cashmere shawl, wherein were stuck his dagger and pistol, which were of exquisite workmanship: his turban was of the finest muslin; his slippers were of yellow leather.

He said something by way of welcome, and mingled with it, as he did with everything, a verse of the Koran; but he constantly kept his keen grey eyes fixed inquisitively, and as I thought, somewhat anxiously, upon us. These cunning eyes had withal that eagle aspect which an iris surrounded by a white circle always imports.

I stated the object of our mission—to deliver into the sultan's hand, letters from the British officer commanding at Aden, craving his alliance and assistance against the unruly Abdali, the Futhalis, and the Subbeih Arabs, and to repress their turbulent attacks.

"The Subbeih Arabs have united with the Emir Mohamed against the Futhalis," replied the vizier; "and tidings have just come in of a desperate encounter on the plains of Beitel Fakih, where he has routed the Sultan Ahmed, destroyed his camp, and besieged him in a castle until he was forced to eat ilhiz, a wretched mess composed of blood and camel's hair, used only by the poorest Arabs in the time of famine. Our lord, the sultan," he continued, as he seated himself cross-legged, and motioned us to do the same, "is not now in Sana. For three months he has been at Hesn-al-Mouhabib, a castle on the other side of the Hargiah river, where, concealing himself from all, this sun of Yemen and light of wisdom has given himself up to the useless adoration of a beautiful slave—the rose and diamond of the seraglio."

I murmured a reply, to the effect of having repeatedly heard as much before.

"Her beauty or her power must be altogether marvellous, for our sublime master is somewhat advanced in years, and has never been so enchanted before, although the most beautiful women of Arabia, and the most pleasant of Egypt, adorn his castle of Mouhabib."

"Does he wish to marry her?"

"Yes; though he has four wives already; like the Prophet, he may wed as many as he pleases, as he is the maker of his own laws; but the people dare to grumble under their beards, and swear this woman has enchanted him; and they name her 'the daughter of a Jew and a Jewess,' our bitterest reproach."

"You have seen this slave, I presume?"

"Who; I? God and the Prophet forbid! I am not worthy to

look upon that which delights the eye and heart of Solymán the Magnificent. Save his, no man's eye has seen her, since she was purchased; nor shall any man behold her from thenceforward."

"Will she never weary?" asked Langley.

"She—weary! the woman's a slave, and dare not be weary. It the Holy Prophet would but light up the darkness of thy soul, O Kafir, with one ray of knowledge, thou wouldst know that—that—" and here, as I suppose, having no idea with which to close his sentence, he scratched his red beard, placed the amber tube of his pipe in his mouth, and nodded to me, as much as to say, "you comprehend."

"Then I presume this lady is supremely happy in being the object of so much love in the heart of this great prince."

"No; wilt thou credit me, when I say she is *not*; but such is the perversity of human nature, and such is the obstinacy of women, that though Solymán, who is the centre of wisdom, deigns to turn his sublime eyes upon her in admiration, she has never once favoured him with a smile; and I have frequently advised him to punish her contumacy."

"But how?" asked Langley.

"The sultan is the axis of all human knowledge! thus when the ladies of the seraglio displease him, he punishes them in a mode which affords himself supreme amusement."

"In what manner?" said I.

"By filling their hair with wasps, or putting a couple of lively rats into their cotton drawers for a day or so, till the gambols of the animals nearly drive the lady distracted. I have recommended him to try this with the obdurate slave, for I assure you that the little word RAT makes the whole seraglio tremble!"

"Do you believe that the sultan will view the object of my despatches with favour?"

"It is impossible to say, for the stupendous Solymán—the soul of all wisdom — is seldom two days in the same mind. I have known him cut the heads off a couple of favourite wives one day, and then rend his beard with grief for them the next. Lately having over-eaten himself with hulwah, and believing he was dying, he asked three aged dervishes, who had just come from the Land of the Pilgrimage, 'if they believed the Holy Prophet would forgive all his iniquities.' Each dervish answered 'No; for those iniquities were of too black a character.' 'Then I may do as I please,' roared the Brother of the Sun and Moon; 'Worms, begone to Eblis!' and then he made *the sign* to the chief executioner, by whom the three rash dervishes were immediately strangled. But, alas! our lord, the sultan, grew worse, and then he sent for the venerable santón Nouredin, who dwells in the Cave of the Sleeper, and put the same question to him; but the santón, whom the fate of his predecessors made wary, replied, 'that if he would build a noble mosque on the ruins of the Christian church which was built by Abrahá al Ashram, the Slit-nosed King of Yemen,

before even the days of the Prophet, he *might* taste the joys of Paradise.' 'Go; thou art a sensible haji; I shall build the mosque, and repent after,' replied the Giver of Crowns; and so he built that beautiful mosque which you saw this morning."

"And he repented?"

"Who can tell?" said the vizier, puffing vigorously. "The mind of the mighty Solyman is profound as the Well of Borhüt, so what mortal can fathom its thoughts! But Nouredin slew the evil spirit that tormented him. He called thrice on the name of the Prophet, and shot seven arrows into the air. As the seventh rose, a cry was heard; when it fell, the shaft was covered *with blood*, and then the sultan was cured."

A slave now set wine and cake before us, but of course the vizier turned aside with repugnance when we drank, so I set down my silver cup without intending to finish it, and turned, with Fred, to the window to see a marriage procession pass; and when I looked again, the cup was *empty*.

Such anecdotes as those of the vizier were not calculated to impress us favourably with the character of the sultan, to whose Castle of the Graces he offered to conduct us on the morrow, and in the meantime press us to dine with him. Though Langley was anxious to return to his Arabic lessons, and I found no great pleasure in contemplating the cunning face, or in listening to the bombast of this vizier, we were constrained to accept, for the heat of noon had now arrived. He threw off his benish and upper garment, and, ordering fresh wine for us, fell asleep for half an hour. After this, he awoke, bathed himself, prayed devoutly, and then we sat down to a very fair repast, which was served up after the fashion of the country, and at which the katib and Mahmoud Ali Badr, a nakib or captain of the sultan's horseguard, joined us. The latter was a fine looking young Arab, clad in a steel cap and chain shirt.

Fred was in excellent humour, and believing, of course, that none there knew English but myself, handed me a kabob of meat on the end of a wooden skewer, saying,

"Will you have soup or fish, before the boiled turkey comes?" at which Rabb-al-Hoosi laughed aloud, which increased my suspicion of him.

Wines were set before Fred and me, but our host and his friends drank pure water; and though those of Sana, like its fruit and coffee, are both good and plentiful, I cannot say that we enjoyed our bottle, owing to the glances of loathing with which the vizier, the katib, and the captain regarded us, while breaking that law of the Koran which forbids the use of all strong and inebriating liquors. A drop fell upon Al Hoosi's hand as Langley passed the crystal jug to me, and he uttered a cry of disgust which made me feel rather discomposed, and Fred twirled his moustache, and fairly put his glass into his eye, on hearing a slave summoned, with an ewer and laver, to wash the pollution away.

"Excuse me," said the vizier; "but I would not for all the riches of Karûn have this stain upon me!"

Almost immediately afterwards the poor old katib had a narrow escape from death, for as a slave filled the pipe of the officer of the guard, a spark fell upon the pan of the pistol in his girdle, and the charge exploded, sending the ball right through the dish of sweets from which the secretary was regaling himself. This never discomposed the three Arabs in the slightest degree; another plate was brought, and the accident was dismissed from memory.

Soon after the secretary and the Captain Mahmoud Ali withdrew together, but the vizier insisted on our remaining; and the moment the Arabs were gone and the doors closed upon them, he produced from behind his cushion three bottles of admirable port and one of brandy, and with a cunning leer in his grey eyes extracted the corks, and filled up his silver drinking-horn, which he drained to our healths.

"What says the Koran?" said I.

"That we may take whatever is good for us, and wine (if dashed with brandy) is very good for me."

"I remember Abdulmelik said the same thing."

"He is a wise man."

"Until now, I believed that you shuddered at everything but pure water."

"Water be ——! I never take it when I can get better, or when I am alone; and now that those humbugs the katib and nakib are gone, let us drink and be merry."

He seemed to be a happy and lively fellow, and troubled us no more with quotations from the Koran for that night, but overwhelmed us with questions about our own country and Aden; but we were on our guard, and gave him very reserved answers when asked the strength and number of our troops, guns, &c., as we knew not to what use the information might be turned. He laughed on hearing the story of our adventures with Amina, and said he knew the merchant well, having bought several women, mutes and eunuchs from him; and he rallied Fred smartly on his "investment," as he named her.

We spent a merry afternoon with him, and the muezzins were again crying "Prayer is better than sleep!" from the minarets of the mosques at sunset, before we returned to the caravansera, having made arrangements for setting out next day with the vizier for the famous Hesn-al-Mouhabib.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE ROSE GARDEN OF IREM.

THE winning Amina welcomed us with the brightest of smiles; she heard with pride how her tribe had punished the Futhalis; and then she sorrowed for the poor Sultan Ahmed and his people.

"Why so," I asked; "are they not a band of wretches?"

"But hatred and anger should never continue after a wrong is atoned for."

Love, like fruit, soon ripens under the warm sun of the tropics; and already had Amina learned to love Fred Langley. The interest which that politeness and kindness natural to gentlemen caused us both to take in her friendless position, had stirred a chord in the depth of her ardent heart, though neither of us, and honest Fred least of all, for a time suspected it. But a fount had been opened up in her breast, and in her young affectionate heart; a fount of deep, sincere and quiet joy, such as she had never known before; and when Fred addressed her, I began to perceive how her small hands became tremulous, and her eyelids heavy with the tears of this newborn happiness.

Having never learned to reflect, she saw no shadow resting on the pictured future; and knowing nothing of the world, she was all candour and innocence itself. She was always fearful, timid, and sad when we left her; but in our presence, especially that of Langley, perfect happiness imparted a splendid beauty to her fine eyes, to her sweet pretty mouth, and soft pale features.

"Oh, I am now so happy—so very happy!" she said, with a sigh, after one of her thoughtless bursts of laughter.

"May you ever remain so," said Fred, contemplating her with admiration, as she reclined among the soft cushions; "it is my dearest wish."

"You are both most kind and good to your poor Amina; but then she loves you both so well!"

This was addressed to me in her soft harmonious language; but her eye fell upon Fred, who changed colour as he fanned her with a tuft of soft ostrich feathers, and playfully lifted the braids of her thick black hair. He took her hand in his, and she permitted it to linger there for a minute. He pressed it, and for that minute she was passive and palpitating like a little bird.

I observed all this over the top of an Arabic book which I was endeavouring to decipher, and on perceiving how master Fred reddened from time to time, I began to wish that our lovely Amina was in the safe keeping of her brother before worse came to pass.

I turned over leaf after leaf of those monotonous pothooks, crooks, and dots which make up the sum of Arabic writing; but my companions had now become silent. They sat long thus, and yet I was assured it was not altogether silence, because nothing was said; for Amina had her beautiful eyes, and they were full of quiet thoughts and voiceless words.

The result of all this was, that next morning when the vizier sent the Arab Captain Mahmond to invite us to see a troop of horse practising with their matchlocks and tossing the jereid at a target, Fred took care to have an overpowering headache, and declared himself quite unable to mount his nag. He assured me it was caused

by Rabb-al-Hoosi's bad wine; but I knew better, and that he was only "malingering" to enjoy the society of our seductive little Arab, and I felt somewhat provoked in consequence.

I was obliged to leave them alone, and that forenoon confirmed all the mischief.

Amina's timid and wavering trust soon ripened into complete confidence and love, and the hitherto repressed affections of her warm heart were poured forth at the altar of this new idol; a glance had kindled the spark, and the spark soon blew up the magazine.

And who was the object of this love? Not a wild Arab warrior, the Kior Ibn Kogia; not a bold emir, like her brother; nor a handsome prince, like one of those in the "Arabian Nights;" it was none of these, but a young Englishman, a dashing devil-may-care fellow in a regiment of the Line; a man of fashion and pleasure; yet, with all his off-hand style, I knew Langley to be so strictly a man of honour, that I believed with confidence that this poor and half barbarian girl would not have reason to repent the love she was nursing in her bosom.

When I returned to announce that after the heat of noon was past we should set out for Hesn-al-Mouhabib, I found them still together, and that Fred had made great progress in the language of the Prophet. It was evident that without reflecting he had given himself up to "the intoxication of the affair," as he afterwards said, "to the romance of flirting with a real live Arabian in that rich oriental dress, which so greatly enhanced her dangerous beauty."

"But surely, Fred," said I, as we left her, to load our pistols and prepare for the road, "you are not growing tender with this girl?"

"I fear that I am—in fact, I have fallen in love at last."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, fall out again!"

"Impossible, my dear fellow."

"You are *not* in love; it is only a fancy, a *penchant*, and you must conquer it, or there will be the devil to pay."

"But love begets love—is your brandy-flask empty?—and the poor girl loves me."

"Are you sure it is not a purer and perhaps more angelic sentiment she entertains?"

"More angelic than love! now my philosophical Scot, what may that be?"

"Gratitude—how many cartridges have you?"

"Thirteen, a baker's dozen. Gratitude, oh, she may feel that for us both, but I don't think she minds you very much, in any way, my boy," said Fred, with one of his merry laughs.

"Love often dies, but pure gratitude lives for ever."

"How you talk! 'pon my soul, you are becoming infected by those Arab fellows who always speak as if they were on stilts, and never come down."

"Would you like to marry her?"

"Hum—why not? Some of 'the Queen's Own' have perhaps done worse ere now."

"Take her to England, and you will lay your head on a pillow of thorns."

"Beside those sweet eyes and all those magnificent braids of hair!"

"She is only an uneducated, unaccomplished—"

("But assuredly charming?")—

"Barbarian!"

Fred winced at this word, for he felt its truth.

"Alas! yes," said he, "but it is so evident that she is all confidence and expectation—a mere child, and may be taught anything; a child, and in her perfect guilelessness never doubts my loving her for ever. When I was eighteen, Frank, I used to dream of such a love as this."

"And you are now—"

"Seven-and-twenty," said Langley, putting the last cap on his revolver.

"Ah! the realities of seven-and-twenty are very different from the visions of eighteen."

"Especially after being nine years with 'the Queen's Own;' but *this* reality is charming indeed!" replied my heedless comrade, while I could not repress a little sigh, as this turn in our conversation brought to memory many things I would fain have forgotten.

"Come, come, Frank, my dear fellow," said Fred, in his blunt English way, "don't get into the blues, here, at all events, when we are so far from the regiment, and have only each other to rely on for encouragement and camaraderie. I know all *about it*—poor Cecil Marchmont! Once in his life, at least, you know, every man must expect to be thwarted in love; but now dinner, or lunch, which you will, is ready, and we must not keep our pretty companion waiting."

We rejoined her again, and during our repast, she was as usual all smiles and radiance, especially for Langley; I began to find I was little better than "nobody," now, and a species of bore, perhaps; but when I gazed on her large black eyes, which had all the softness of the most languid blue, and on the engaging smile that was always playing like sunlight on her little face, I could not wonder that Fred's unoccupied heart had yielded to the enchantment of a love which, under happier auspices, might have won and dazzled me too.

She had seen us read, for I had two small shilling volumes in my valise, and she gazed anxiously and inquisitively at the books, as if she fain would have deciphered them too, and believing, doubtless, that Fred should then love her more. Then to please us, she offered to exert her principal accomplishment, and relate one of those little traditionary stories which form the staple of *Arabian literature*.

"What shall it be?" she asked.

"Whatever pleases you will delight us," said Langley.

"Then I will tell you about the *Rose Garden of Irem*, and how it came to pass that destruction fell upon it."

"It will please us the more," said I, "because we have just come from Aden, the place where it stood."

"Ah! *you* know that," said Amina; "well, save the Cities of the Plain, there is no spot of earth whereon the wrath of Heaven has fallen more heavily than yonder blighted place; at least, so the Santon Nouredin told me, for I never was beyond the Vale of Jebel Ahmer. It is a spot where even the mimosa tree can scarcely find soil for its slender root, and yet it was an Eden in the times of old."

"Indeed, Amina!" said I, pleased with her prattling manner, and charmed by her musical voice, "but how came a change so mournful to pass?"

"My brother told me you had read our Koran."

"Well, Amina," (she had it all by rote.)

"Do you remember the eighty-ninth chapter thereof, which was revealed to the only Prophet at Mecca?"

"I must confess that I do not."

"Do *you*?" she asked Fred, with a winning smile.

Poor Fred shook his head; he knew the contents of the "Army List," "Racing Calendar," and the "Peerage," much better.

"It relates how Heaven dealt with Ad," continued Amina, rolling her black eyes with awe, and lowering her voice, "and how it chastised the people of Irem, the worshippers of the dog-star. Listen to me.

"Then Aden was Irem, a mighty rose garden, like unto the Garden of Paradise, and therein was great plenty, with rich fruits and lovely flowers, that gave forth perfume without fading. The Addites were then a great people, in every sense of the word, for the smallest among them was at least sixty cubits high, and the tallest a hundred; and they adorned the place with many lofty buildings; and their women were beautiful as the Houris of Heaven; but alas! they were wicked beyond all earthly wickedness. Ad was the fourth in descent from Noah; so this, you observe, was very long ago; yet he founded this beautiful city, and his tribe spread throughout Al Ahkif, the winding sands of Hadramaut, while his son became khalif of Shedad, which extended from the golden beach of Alaj, to the pleasant green groves of Oman, wherein the wondrous phoenix was wont to build its nest.

"Ad built unto himself a palace in the midst of the garden, and adorned it with precious stones; the walls were covered with plates of gold, and a thousand lamps lighted the room of thrones by night. If had four times that number of pinnacles, each of which was tipped by a pomgranate of pure gold. Around it were trees, the leaves of which were emeralds from the mines of Mount Zaharah, an island in the Red Sea; and the fruits of which were shining

pearls, or bunches of brilliant rubies, while the walks between were strewn with powdered musk and amber, to be soft under the naked feet of the beautiful odalisques who dwelt in them. On this palace Ad spared no labour, neither spared he any cost, to make it like a terrestrial paradise.

"Now, puffed up with inordinate vanity, he took upon himself the character of a god; but to punish this, and the exceeding wickedness of his luxurious people, after they had refused to hear the preaching of his brother, the Prophet Hûd, there came upon Aden a long drought, that lasted for many years, during which the scorching sun seemed to draw nearer and more near every day, till the earth became burning hot, and turned to yellow sand; while the rocks rent and split, the sea shrank, and all vegetable life died, for the beautiful rose garden of Irem became scorched up, and withered away as if a tongue of flame had passed over it, and nothing remained but the emerald trees with their ruby fruit.

"In great misery, the people of Ad sent their only good man, Kajl Ibn Saad, with seventy of their wisest and best elders, to the City of the Faithful, to pray for rain; but, lo! they plunged into all manner of sin, forgetting their mission of prayer, until some words which fell from the lips of a wanton dancer of Oman, who said she was athirst, and wanted more wine, recalled the sufferings of their people; then they implored Heaven to send them rain; upon which, even while they prayed, there appeared in the firmament three clouds—a red, a white, and a black one.

"Then a terrible voice summoned Kajl to choose one for the people of Irem, and after long and mature deliberation, he chose the third, or dark one; being assured it must contain the greatest supply of rain; and the Addites hailed with joy the shadow of this cloud as it passed over their scorched plains and sunburnt valleys, saying—

"Lo! this is the traversing cloud which bringeth rain—the bounty of heaven."

"Nay," answered Hûd, 'it is what ye chose, a cloud, verily, but it containeth only the wind of sure vengeance.'

"Then they mocked him with loud laughter; but, alas! for the shortsightedness of mortals!

"That black cloud was charged with all the wrath of heaven; for fire, smoke, and ashes came out of its dusky bosom, with a burning wind from the sands of the west, and in three days the people of Ad and Irem had passed away! They were no longer men or women.

"They shrunk, withered, and became monkeys, for the greatness of their sins, and in that shape they yet dwell in Aden."*

"And what became of the stately city of those giants?" I asked, somewhat amused by the legend, which contained a good moral, how-

* See Sale's Koran.

ever, and smiling as I remembered the reed-covered wigwams adjoining our barrack at Aden.

"It still exists."

"Exists! but where?"

"In the deserts of Aden," replied Amina, with the most implicit good faith, "yet it has never been seen save once. In the reign of the Khalif Moawijah, a traveller, named Abdalla Ibn Kalila, having lost his way at the foot of the Coffee Mountains, journeyed on in great fear, lest the Subbeih Arabs should rob and slay him; and gladly he urged his weary dromedary towards the gates of a noble city which appeared before him in the light of the rising moon. The portals, which were of vast height, with gates of polished brass, stood open, as if inviting him to enter.

"The streets were formed by long lines of mighty structures that stretched away in far and dim perspective—columns and arcades of marble and jasper, with gilded domes, and tall and slender minarets, white as snow, with gilded vanes and pinnacles that glittered in the liquid moonlight, while thousands of coloured lamps lit up every long vista and magnificent peristyle.

"But everywhere there reigned a dread, a solemn, and an awful silence—yea, the silence of the deepest grave—for the terrified traveller heard only the footfalls of his own dromedary echoing under each stupendous colonnade and empty vault, or the spash of the lonely fountains that sparkled in the solitude of the market-places.

"In all that wondrous city's vast extent—for it was a city to which Mocha and Medina were but hamlets, and even Mecca, the mother of cities, was but an Arab camp—not even a spider moved, or the smallest insect crept!

"For hours this weary son of Kalilah wandered on in terror and affright, as one in a wild and appalling dream, for these colossal streets were apparently without end, and seemed to multiply themselves before him; at last he beheld a lofty gate higher than the dome of the Kaaba, and beyond it lay the green Coffee Mountains.

"Gladly he issued forth, and calling upon the blessed name of the Prophet, in his joy, looked back; but lo! not a vestige, not a stone of that silent city was visible! He saw only the far extent of a green plain, where the rice and maize were waving their long stalks in the bright moonlight, and the dense groves of orange and citron that clothed the sides of the bordering hills; and never since then has the doomed city of the transformed Addites been visible to mortal eyes; for he who rides through what seems a fertile valley or a barren desert, may be close to its echoing walls, and yet be unable to perceive the smallest trace thereof."

The end of this story brought us to the time for marching, and after the necessary arrangements we left the caravansera, and joined the escort of the vizier, at the street of the great bazaar, where fruit, bread, salt, and butter are sold, and opposite to which is another, where new garments are bartered for old—or *vice versa*.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD.

LANGLEY and I rode our own horses, but Amina, and a female attendant procured for her through the kindness of the old katib, were mounted on a stout and handsome dromedary. They were muffled in their veils and black silk mellayes, and rode under the shade of a broad umbrella.

The vizier was magnificently armed and mounted, and was attended by a brilliant train of horsemen, with long lances, under the Arab captain, Mahmoud Ali Badr, who on the previous day had been friendly enough to inform me (though an infidel) that it would be very unsafe to leave Amina alone at the caravansera, until our return from the Castle of the Graces—a measure first proposed by Langley, who wished to remain with her.

We passed a straggling suburb, occupied by nearly three thousand Jews, and entered on the beautiful plain of Rodda. The sun was verging towards the west, and its golden gleam was falling on mosque and spire, on each embattled tower, and on the three great brick palaces of the Imaum Mahedi, as we rode from Sana, and saw the long shadow of Mount Nikkum falling far across the stony vale in which the city stands.

The vizier looked so frequently at Amina, as we rode by his side, that my suspicions were excited, and I began to surmise that she might have been quite as safe if left, as Fred had proposed, in *his* care at the caravansera.

"So her name is Amina," said the grey-eyed vizier (the Arabs have a great prejudice against grey eyes), "a pretty name enough, and the first who bore it was the mother of our Prophet. And this damsel is an Abdala? Ah; they are always handsome, the women of the Abdali. Is she young?"

"Just sixteen," said I, briefly.

"And beautiful?"

"Beyond conception!" said the unwary proprietor.

"Excuse me; but not being true believers, I may speak to you about her. Sixteen, and beautiful? By the blacked-eyed maids of Paradise, you were wise to purchase her, for young damsels are charming! Old ones are all humbug—a blot on creation and a mistake from the beginning; but we keep few about us here, where the faithful are allowed a promiscuous supply."

"I can assure you, my lord," said Fred, "you can form no idea of Amina's loveliness and winning manner!"

"Have you married her?" asked Rabd-al-Hoosi, drily, while I gave Fred a warning glance.

"Married her—what a question—why?"

"Well—never praise a woman until you have done so," replied the vizier, with one of his hearty laughs, in which the young nakib and the old secretary of course joined. "Present her to our lord, the sultan, and should she find favour in his sight, your mission will be achieved."

"I thank you," replied Fred, suppressing his anger at the suggestion, "but I should as soon think of presenting my own head."

"By making one sign with his sublime finger, the Imaum might take both in a moment," replied Rabd, looking Fred calmly in the face; "but presenting handsome women to Solyman, is like carrying pepper to Hindustan; for the silent slave, whom he loves at present, is said to surpass all the roses in his garden of love."

We rode by a path among the mountains, the sides of which were teeming with fertility; for there grew the coffee plant, the olive, and the wild sugar-cane, the date, the grape, and the pomegranate, while the green melon and the soft pulpy gourd, with their fibrous creepers, were woven and matted together by the side of the narrow path. The golden gleam yet lingered on the mountain slopes, and a warm cream-tint rested on the glittering city we had left. It was evening now, but all the vale of Sana, where the Shab was winding towards the Indian Sea, was palpitating in the sunny glow. In our front and rear rode the horsemen of Ali Badr, all pure Arabs of the old race, as their large black eyes, jet hair, high foreheads, and bushy beards declared; while their bright flowing garments, scarlet turbans, lances, bucklers, and horses, so richly caparisoned, reminded me of the old Spanish ballads about the Cid Rodrigo, and his battles with the Moors of Granada.

We made a temporary halt near a well between two green hills, for the Mohamedan prayer, as the sun dipped below the horizon; and then a simple refreshment was taken — cakes of dhourra, or coarse millet seed, kneaded with camel's milk, and then a draught of water into which there was shaken a little ginger powder, a spice in which the Yemenees delight.

"One of those hills whereon *thou* seest a grove of palms," said the vizier, who, when addressing us generally, used that mode which is now obsolete in our language, "was crowned by one of the seven temples which the ancient Arabs dedicated to the seven planets. It was in honour of Venus, but was destroyed by the Khalif Osman; and when the foundation-stone was raised, there was found graven upon it a prophecy, that *he who destroyed the temple would be slain!*"

"And was it fulfilled?"

"When Osman saw it, he rent his beard and garments in great fear, and prayed to Heaven for protection, but none was given, and he perished in Medina, where, while holding the Koran in his aged hands, he was hewn to pieces by the cimeters of Ayesha, the fire brand of Islam. On the other hill, where the desert wind has scathed the coffee groves, Solyman Ibn Daood rested, on the noon of that day when he set out from Medina."

"How," said I, in astonishment; "Medina is nearly six hundred Arabian miles distant."

"Well," continued the vizier, dipping his hands in the fountain and sprinkling his beard, "that mattered little to Solyman, for he possessed a carpet of green silk, woven more curiously than those of the Guebres—the fire-worshippers of our own day,—and it was so large that it held his throne with all his court and army, horse, foot, and chariots; thus, by one word he could transport the whole to any part of the world; and thus it was he passed over Sana about noon, canopied by a thousand eagles, whose outspread wings protected him from the sunbeams. And in the valley between those hills stood the palm grove which the Prophet, by a miracle, destroyed in a night, because of the uncharitable hearts of its owners.* Many such stories might I tell, for every rock and hill, every ruined wall and wayside well hath its history; but, alas! thine ears are sealed up like those of the five scoffers of the Koreish, against the divine truths of Islam, and the time-honoured traditions which corroborate them. La Allah il Allah! Mahmouda rusoul Allah!" he added, turning up his eyes, and beating his breast seven times; "let us mount and depart!"

Though this was said and done with the greatest fervour and devotion, I remembered the sudden production of the bottles of wine and brandy on the preceding evening, and felt, I know not why, a renewed suspicion of this great personage Rabd-al-Hoosi, who made himself so friendly and facetious with entire strangers, and whose cunning grey eyes seemed to glitter with an incessant leer or twinkle.

I mentioned my thoughts to Amina as we mounted again and set forth; she assured me that the Vizier of Sana was esteemed as a very mirror of truth and wisdom; but of the Imaum Solyman, the Sheikh of sheikhs, Slave of the Prophet, and Giver of Crowns, &c. &c. &c.—for so this tremendous little potentate styled himself,—she gave a most appalling account, and as the horsemen were considerably in advance and rear of us, and as her female slave was a mute, she spoke without reserve or fear.

"He is treacherous, remorseless, and tyrannical," said Amina, whose eyes seemed to speak as they flashed under her veil; "my brother Mohamed has told me that none dare approach him, even to kiss his slippers, save on their knees, with their beards on the carpet. His cruelties have made him dread his own sons, so he has banished them to remote and distant castles. He has more than thirty daughters, all of whom he has wedded to sheikhs and emirs. In some instances forcing them to divorce or destroy wives of their own choice. He has borrowed vast sums from Jews and Parsees, whose heads were struck off when they importuned for payment. When he becomes jealous of the power or popularity of any warlike sheikh, he heaps honours upon him in public, and orders him the

* Koran.

bowstring in private—or despatches him openly upon some splendid embassy, and sends secretly a party of Bedouins to waylay and murder him. Three of his own brothers, all brave and good men, who had interceded for three old dervishes whom he condemned to die, were strangled also—but with cords of silk, as the blood of an imaum cannot be shed. He put all his father's wives to death on his succession, lest any of them might have children; and he frequently seizes and marries the wives of others, his scruples being entirely removed by the cunning Santon Noureddin, who said, that though there was no law for such things, yet there was *one* which said that the mighty Sultan of Sana, the Shadow of the Prophet upon earth, might do as he pleased; and Solyman has invariably done so."

Such was the wise potentate on whom I was to urge the advantages of an alliance with her Majesty!

"Ha! ha!" laughed the vizier, as Amina concluded; "by the beard of Ali! there has never been such a biography given since the devils shaved the Queen of Saba!"

Amina uttered a cry of terror; for, unseen by us, Rabd-al-Hoosi had ridden close up on the other side of her dromedary, and thus heard all that the innocent girl had told me in confidence. I could make no reply; for a moment my soul seemed in my mouth, and I trembled for the punishment which, in such a land of barbarians, might await this freedom of expression. But after a time she smiled again, and remained perfectly placid; for the strong conviction that it is completely futile to attempt averting one's destiny imparts a desperate self-possession to the Moslem under any circumstances.

"Fred," said I, checking my horse a little, "what do you think of this account of his majesty the sultan—flattering, is it not?"

"I think he is an unparalleled old brute, and might run in a cur-ricule with Bluebeard, or Henry VIII. It would be well for us to be safe again with the regiment, in whole skins. Ah, if the sultan should see or hear of Amina, and attempt to seize her!"

"Well?"

"Well!" reiterated Fred, with rising anger; "can you think of such a thing with patience?"

"She is his subject."

"Were she ten times his subject, I would give him the contents of this revolver, and *shall* do so, even were he greater than the Khalif Haroun, instead of being merely the petty tyrant of this most petty kingdom."

"Then you love this Arab girl, Fred?"

"You ask a very plain question—it deserves as plain an answer—I *do* love her. Well?"

"Do you love her wisely?"

"That is another, and an unpleasant consideration. Look at the dear fairy, Hilton, as she sits bustled up on the hump of that honest old dromedary, with her black eyes peering through her veil, and

her pretty hand playing with the fringe of her parasol! I love her in spite of myself; for the purest, dearest, and most tender emotions swell up in my heart every time she addresses me."

"Of course—these are only the premonitory symptoms of a regular love-fit—even Dr. Splint could not cure you."

"Be assured, my dear Frank, there is something both enchanting and painful in the conviction that this charming girl loves me," said Fred, urging his horse nearer mine; "but what am I to do with her? It is really very perplexing!"

"You cannot have the smallest idea of marriage?" I suggested.

"To tell you the truth, I have too much regard for the girl to think ever of marrying her."

"How flattering to the future Mrs. Langley, whoever she may be!"

"Could I take her to the regiment, or, worse still, home to my family? An uneducated yet beautiful Arab—what would my mother—what would my fashionable and highly-accomplished sisters say? And what would all my pretty, flirting, and, it may be, disappointed cousins say and think too?"

"That you were mad, likely."

"She thinks not of marriage after *our* mode, because she has no idea of so indissoluble a tie; but I, who know better, would be a rascal to contemplate it after hers; and it would, indeed, be painful and humiliating to her, if she knew how I, one on whom she has lavished all her heart, and founded all her hopes, regard her; a poor and unlettered barbarian, whom it would, as you say with bitter truth, be thought a madness to marry. Yet, she is the daughter of an emir, whose race goes back to the days of Ishmael, and beats hollow the longest pedigree of our English, or even your Scottish families, who have no Norman Conquest to date their honours from."

"I am glad that your ideas on this subject are so sensible. This Arab love is all very romantic, and so forth; but in a marriage with Amina, where would be the chariot-and-four, the bride in her pretty nuptial bonnet—all fair beauty and blonde lace, white flowers and pink blushes—the dean in his lawn sleeves—the—"

"The devil! Oh, no; but I have been going a little too far. Why the deuce did you leave me with her for a whole forenoon?"

"Why the deuce did you stay?"

"I made amazing progress in my Arabic during your absence.

"Then there were sighs the deeper for suppression,
And stolen glances sweeter for the theft ——"

Here I burst into a fit of laughter.

"I have heard you quote those lines twenty times, to twenty different girls."

"Where?" asked Fred.

"At Berwick. York. Canterbury——"

"And now here, at Sana," said he, laughing too ; "what strange lives we lead—we fellows who follow the drum!"

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CASTLE OF THE GRACES.

WE crossed a river, and the clear, cold night, with its brilliantly spangled sky, and chilly dew that dropped from every broad palm-leaf, and every blade of grass, had set in ere we saw before us, on the summit of a steep eminence, the lights of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, or the Castle of the Graces, the residence of the imaum, whom his vizier never mentioned but with the deepest respect, and in the most absurd terms of Oriental hyperbole, especially when the nakib Ali Badr was in hearing.

Near the path by which we approached it, we perceived the bodies of several Futhalis, who had been hung alive by the shoulder-blades on iron hooks, and allowed to remain there until they perished under the beaks and claws of jackals and vultures. These served as pleasant fingerposts to the sultan's abode of delights.

This fortress is built of unburned brick and stone, with massive battlements, and presented a number of those arched galleries and arcades which we see represented in views of the Alhambra, and great masses of beautiful arabesque fretwork intricately detailed. The great portal was of marble, ornamented by many dozens of Chinese vases, and defended by two large brass guns. The gates jarred heavily as they were closed behind us. I found myself gazing wistfully at them, and I know not how, or why it was, but there stole over me a strange melancholy, an undefined anxiety, when I found that we were fairly among the guards, and behind the gates of Solyman.

Could I have seen the future !

The building was surrounded by a high fortified wall, pierced with loopholes. It was divided into two great masses ; one was the residence of the officers of state, the guards, and attendants ; the other was the sacred quarter of the seraglio, where the sultan resided with no less than seven hundred ladies. Many of the apartments were floored with marble, and decorated by innumerable knots, stars, crescents, and festoons of stucco, with inscriptions from the Koran, painted in gold and green ; the ceilings were of carved walnut-wood ; orange, lemon, and citron trees spread their branches round the windows without, while innumerable little fountains, playing in basins of white marble, imparted a delightful coolness within. The whole fortress occupied a piece of tabular rock, and in the foundations of it, his father, inspired by some heathenish spirit, had built alive the most beautiful virgin of his seraglio.

A long range of stables occupied one side of the quadrangle, and

there were kept the horses of the guards and the camels of the ladies, who, when they ventured abroad, were enclosed in large cages covered with hangings of crimson silk, and stuffed with cushions of down. The entrance to these enclosures was a small opening, concealed by a linen curtain, and any man attempting to raise it would have been slain on the instant by Osman, chief of the eunuchs, even were he the sultan's only son.

To these stables our horses were led, and the vizier's secretary procured us a suite of apartments, with baths and fountains for our own use. He politely offered to lodge Amina in the harem of his own women; on this suggestion I turned to Fred, whom I concluded it would most interest.

"No, no—say no," said he, pulling my sleeve. "I mistrust all these fellows, and this one only a little less than his master."

I had only to hint my friend's reluctance, when a chamber was at once procured, with slaves to attend her, and with strict injunctions to remember her old custom now, and show her charming face to none, we bade her adieu, for the night was now far advanced, and our benishes were dripping wet with moisture.

The luxuries of the most magnificent house at home dwindled into nothingness when compared to those of our bedchambers. We were lighted to them by Nubian boys, dressed in white, and bearing tapers perfumed with musk and amber; the richest carpets covered the floors; the walls were hung with silk, and the low, square beds were canopied by cloth of silver; the pillows were of white velvet, woven with foliage of gold and silver, and the corner tassels were clusters of turquoises round a ruby. The vases and ewers were of the most beautiful china, and beside each bed there lay on a low tabourette, a Damascened sabre, and a silver drinking-cup filled with sherbet, lest we should be thirsty in the night.

My chamber adjoined Fred's.

"No one will believe all this, Hilton, when we tell them about it," said he.

"Then let those who doubt, come to Hesn-al-Mouhabib, and prove it for themselves," said I.

The walls were inscribed as usual with moral and pious sentences from the Koran. By these, a train of salutary reflections may be started, a current of happy thought awakened, an act of goodness inspired, or one of wickedness arrested. The doorways were hung with Persian silk, dyed into figures of scarlet birds, fruit and gold flowers, on a pale blue ground; the coverlets were of green Persian velvet, having flowers of silver and gold gummed on them. Everything was, as Langley said, "sinfully luxurious."

"Adieu, and may your dreams be happy!" said the venerable katib, as he bade us good night; "to-morrow you will be received in the Hall of the Twenty-four Windows, by the Light of the World and Star of the Seraglio."

"Who the deuce is she?" asked Fred.

"*She*," reiterated the katib, with indignant surprise, "I mean his Sublime Majesty the Imaum Solyman!" And the old man abruptly retired before my friend could apologize.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE HEAD AND THE HEART.

NEXT morning, at an early hour, while the old katib took me, after breakfast, round this fortress of which the Yemenees are very vain, Fred begged to be excused, and repaired to the apartment of Amina, to continue his study of Arabic, no doubt; and so he said; but I had great reason to dread that this addition to the finishing touch he had received at old Trinity College, might play the very devil with us both, if it came to the knowledge of the fiery Abdala Mohamed.

As I afterwards discovered, his studies made great progress that morning, and the hackneyed aphorism, that "women have more heart and less head than men," explains all poor Amina's folly, though it affords no excuse for Fred Langley encouraging her to love him.

The bright morning sun shone through the festooned curtains of an arched window, and in the full glow of its radiance she sat on a pile of cushions, in her pretty Oriental dress, and quite unveiled. Old instinct made her hasten to assume her screen, when Langley threw himself on one knee beside her, and gently drew it aside.

She looked imploringly and lovingly at him; her fine eyes were full of the joyous tears which dared not fall, and her pretty lips trembled with the words she knew not how to utter. She was too enchanting to be resisted or avoided by one whose heart, like Fred's, was full of her.

"I beseech you to give me my veil," said she, trembling.

"Dear, dear Amina," said Langley, "why would you hide your features from one who loves you as I do? Ah, if you could but love me in return—"

"I do love you!" said little Amina, with surprise, while, blushing and palpitating, she stretched out her hands, and gazed with her black eyes full upon him; "yea, so dearly, that you will find none in all the world who will love you more!"

Giddy with pleasure at this startling but artless avowal, Fred pressed her to his heart, and she shed a shower of happy tears.

"And will you love me always?" asked Fred, without considering whether he would reciprocate to the same extent.

"Oh! I will love thee for ever—yea, as Kadajah—as Ayesha loved the Prophet, will I love thee. My heart is full of thee. I am but a poor and ignorant Arab girl compared with thee, yet my brother is a great emir! and I promise—oh, what can I promise thee, for thou art a—Kafir, and believest in nothing!"

Oblivious of all, they sat there long and happily. Amina's head rested on Fred's shoulder, and his arms were around her; and thus they reclined, chin deep, among those delightful cushions on which the faithful are so fond of stretching their languid limbs. The distant hills shone in the warm sunshine, and the soft wind wafted the balmy fragrance of a thousand evergreen coffee groves down the open valley, and Fred was at least in the seventh heaven.

"And you believe," said he, stroking the thick black wavy tresses of her hair, "that because you are an Arab, your love will never pass away?"

"Yes," said Amina, looking up with her humid eyes, and embracing his arm, "I will love you when an old—*old* woman!"

"Alas! dear Amina, listen to what a certain Frankish writer says. 'There is no passion which causes so strong an illusion as love, and its violence we construe into a sign of its duration. Overflowing with this sentiment, the heart extends to the future, and while this love lasts we think it will never end. But it is consumed by its own ardour; it decays with youth; it vanishes with beauty, and dies with old age; for there *never* was, since the creation of the world, a pair of grey haired lovers who sighed for each other!' so said Rousseau (whom I quote from memory), and is this not a sad conviction, Amina?"

The Arab girl was no casuist in these matters.

"I will never believe it!" said she passionately, as she wept, for as Fred had translated slowly and laboriously, every word fell heavily on her light heart; "never! I love once and for ever. The Arab youth loves many, but the Arab maid can love only one! I have been told that the king of Frangistan allows each man to have but one wife only. Oh, that must be delightful—and he must be a good king! Thou wilt take poor Amina to Frangistan?"

"Under its cloudy sky you would soon long for the sunny plains of Arabia the Happy."

"Never, while with thee!"

"Dear—dear Amina (kiss, for the twentieth time)!"

"I should like so much to learn thy faith," said she, after a long pause.

"My—my—what, Amina?"

"The faith of the Nassari—what thou lovest must be good for Amina to know."

"Upon my honour—really—"

"Canst thou not teach me?"

"Not very well," quoth Fred, somewhat perplexed, for his ideas of theology and metaphysics were somewhat vague, and the soft, bright eyes that were tenderly fixed on his, were not calculated to concentrate his mind on such matters, and that time especially.

"Thou canst, and wilt, teach me, for I love thee!" continued the Arab.

"'Pon my soul, I cannot—but why?"

"I should like to be married by one of your moollahs, or dervishes—now thou understandest me," said Amina, hiding her beautiful but crimsoned face in his breast.

"Ah, yes—of course—to be sure," said Fred, kissing her tenderly, for his heart was wrung by the conflict between love and interest, duty and inclination. He loved Amina deeply, and at the same time, oddly enough, wished from his soul that he had never seen her! Was this love pure?

I have my doubts of it.

But just at this critical moment he was summoned to accompany me to the presence of the sultan, and he obeyed with alacrity.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE HALL OF THE TWENTY-FOUR WINDOWS.

A GRAND procession was formed to conduct the sultan from the wing of the castle occupied by the seraglio to the hall of the twenty-four windows, where he usually sat in—what we would term—council; and where he was to receive us. This procession was the more imposing, because for the three preceding months, Solymán had, as the vizier said, "committed his kingdom to the care of Chance, or Eblis, and sunned himself in the eyes of the Silent One," for so had the people named this famous slave, who had not spoken since she was brought to the Castle of the Graces.

Preceded by an aged emir, who bore the Koran in a bag of scarlet silk; preceded also by his sword, pipe, and slipper bearers; by fifty horses and as many camels, four abreast, all magnificently caparisoned with housings of velvet, gold, and silver, each having a battle-axe and Damascus sabre suspended at its saddle, and a plume of feathers on its head, and led by a hundred slaves in turbans and cummerbunds, the sultan appeared plainly apparelled, riding on a snow-white horse, which no other man dared mount. On one side of him rode the Vizier Rabd al Hoosi; on the other the katib, and over them was borne an enormous parasol of green silk, fringed with gold and surmounted by a pomegranate and crescent of silver. Osman Oglou, or black Osman, chief of the eunuchs, a hideous negro, and Baba Booli, the chief strangler, rode behind them, in gorgeous attire. Then came many banners of red, yellow, green, and white, the Moslem colours, charged with stars, crescents, and the double-bladed sword of the Prophet; and a host of Arab drummers and players on cymbals, flutes, gaspahs, bells, timbrels, pipes, and gongs made a hideous medley of discord in the rear.

"Compared to our fine band, is not this hubbub frightful?" said Fred, as we saw the long procession wind round the spacious inner court and garden in coils like a snake, till the sultan alighted at the gilded door, through which he passed, with several of his officers and attendants.

After a little time Ali Badr came to conduct us to the royal presence, and he led us through a crowd of richly dressed and well armed Arab officers, guards, half-naked slaves, and grooms with black and shining faces, into a hall which might well have passed for the famous one in the palace of Aladdin, for it had *twenty-four* windows, all glazed with painted Venetian glass, a lofty-domed roof, painted blue, and starred with gold. From the centre hung a large ball of polished silver. Dark faces, fierce eyes, and richly sparkling dresses, jewels, poniards, pistols, cimitars, turbans, and shawls were on all sides of us. Before us we saw a pile of cushions and a canopied throne; beneath our feet were brilliant Persian carpets, and the whole air was perfumed; but though the hall was crowded, there was not a single sound heard, save the soft murmur of the fountains that played on each side of the throne, and gave an impressive solemnity to the scene.

With his legs crossed and a pipe in his hand, we saw the sultan, an old and dignified, but irritable looking man, with quick, fierce, and restless eyes, seated on the throne of cushions. He was plainly attired in a light green robe laced with gold; his turban, like his beard, was of the whiteness of snow; the hilt of his poniard blazed with diamonds, and from it hung his chaplet, consisting of ninety-nine gigantic rubies of Serendib—(Ceylon); but his attire was the most simple in the hall, except our own. On each side of him stood a beardless eunuch, with a fan, to chase away the flies.

An incident which occurred during our first interview was every way calculated to increase the growing fear and detestation we had of him.

On his knees before him, with his face resting on the lower step of the throne, and his hands bound by a cord, a prisoner was grovelling, in deadly fear. This was the Dola of Abb, who had been accused of being converted to Christianity by a Portuguese priest, and who had just acknowledged his crime, under the fierce lowering eyes of nearly five hundred indignant Mussulmen.

"Let this wretch be ten times bastinadoed, and then be impaled in the usual way," said the Imaum, in the most placid manner.

The *usual way* meant by the shoulder blades on hooks of hot steel, and the groan which escaped from the hapless Dola, as he was borne away, went through me like an electric shock.

"Allah Ackbar!" murmured all the court.

"Solyman is good!" said the vizier, looking round. "Such minds as his only can feel the true glory of dispensing justice; but as to such unbelievers as the Dola of Abb, 'their works,' as the Koran saith, 'are like vapour in the plain, which the thirsty traveller seeth afar off, and thinketh to be water, until he cometh thereto, and findeth it to be nothing.'"

The hypocritical vizier said this in a snuffling voice, and chanted it as all Arabs and Egyptians do when quoting or reading the Koran. The sultan now handed his chibouque to his pipe-bearer; but that

nigh official being somewhat slow, received a blow on the mouth from the royal slipper, and a furious glance, under which he crawled away in the most abject manner. Rabd-al-Hoosi now said, with the deepest respect, to avert the threatening storm,—

"The dog of a moollah, who wrought this loss to Islam, was taken by Sheikh Ibrahim, near the Cave of the Sleeper, and bound to a tree, when his horsemen shot him dead with their matchlocks, after firing for half-an-hour, as they practised at full gallop."

"It is well, O vizier," growled Solymán; "there is no God but one, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

"The Dola of the Faringis at Aden has sent two of his nakibs to sun themselves in the sublime presence of your majesty," said the vizier. "These slaves have craved permission to approach a sultan, whose goodness and grandeur overshadow the whole earth like a mighty umbrella; who permitteth the waters to ebb and to flow, the dhourra to ripen and the coffee to bloom; who doth justice in all things; who is the soul of love, and the right hand of battle; whose eyes, like the sun, see all things; who is proof to the weapons of war, and whose horses are as elephants with teeth of pearl and shoes of gold; whose wives are as chaste as Fatima, and pure and beautiful as the brides of the holy and only Prophet! Lord of all the thrones of the earth, they crave leave to approach you?"

The imaum listened placidly to this tissue of bombast, which I give here as nearly as I can remember it; and had not his keen black eyes been fixed upon us, I am sure we must have laughed outright at its grave absurdity, had not its impiety chilled us.

"They are Christians, no doubt," said the sultan.

"Your majesty, who is the corner-stone of the house of wisdom and father of all excellence, conjectures rightly—they *are* Christians."

"God and the Prophet deliver us from the devil!" said the sultan, in great discomposure. "What would they with us?—but let them approach."

We drew nearer, and kneeling down, as we had been previously instructed by the Katib, kissed the jewelled and dingy hand of his majesty.

"In the name of our queen, and on a mission from the officer commanding at Aden, we have presumed to approach Sana, the centre and capital of the universe," said I, taking a leaf out of the vizier's "guide" to court favour.

"If your greatness, whose mind understandeth everything, and whose eyes see the end of space and beyond it, will condescend to listen, I will read the letter of your slave the Dola of the Kafirs at Aden."

The imaum waved his hand, and Rabd-al-Hoosi read the somewhat plain unflowery and matter-of-fact letter of O'Hara, who in the name of her Britannic Majesty begged to form an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Sultan of Sana and Lord of Mocha, for the benefit of commerce and trade, and the peace of Yemen, by uniting their arms for the total suppression of the Abdali, the Futhalis, and

other hostile tribes, who waged a constant war against the inoffensive garrison established at Aden by virtue of a treaty with the Sultan of Lahadj.

The latter point was not quite true, for we had established ourselves there at the point of the bayonet; but it was as much as our ears were worth to have hinted such a thing to Solyman of Sana.

"Heaven be praised, the letter is ended," said he, with a yawn; then he asked, in a tone of displeasure, what manner of Kafirs we were who allowed a woman to rule us? and why this Queen, who had received her crown by his permission, did not come in person to visit him? because, in that case, had she proved large-eyed, round-hipped, and moonfaced, he would have lodged her with all honour in the seraglio.

I knew not what reply to make to these queries; but Rabd-al-Hoosi came to my aid.

"Heart and liver of the Prophet," said he; "the Faringi queen is a poor Kafir, a barbarian princess, who dwells afar off in a solitary island of the sea—beyond even Serendib or the isles of the Indian Ocean."

The sultan was not disinclined to give me a favourable answer, and a glow of pleasure rose in my breast, for this mission had been a source of no ordinary anxiety to me; and now I hoped by its successful accomplishment that I might at least secure a strong recommendation for a company which I was totally unable to purchase, and which was yet far distant, for I was among our most junior lieutenants, of whom we had twenty-three, being on the Indian establishment. As for Fred Langley, who had £6000 per annum, I never thought about him or his prospects.

"Let Yacoob the diviner be summoned," said Solyman, "and if the omen is favourable, O vizier, we will enter into a league with this Dola of Aden, against the wandering tribes of Yemen."

Though divination by an arrow or other means is expressly forbidden by the Koran, the only code of law known to the Moslems, the pious Rabd-al-Hoosi made no comment when it was the Imaum's proposal, but summoned one of those impostors, who sit at street-corners in the cities of the East, and pretend to foretell the success of war, trade, marriage, or any undertaking.

The diviner, a miserable-looking old Arab of Oman, in a turban and cummerbund, with his bare breast overgrown by hair as white as his beard, chose seven arrows (seven is a mystical number in all countries) from the quivers of so many soldiers, and took the barbs off them.

Then he fixed to three of them a piece of paper inscribed "*God and the Prophet require this!*"

On other three he wrote, "*God and the Prophet forbid this!*" One arrow he left blank.

The seven were then shaken in a quiver, and one was drawn forth by Mahmoud Ali Badr, whose eyes were blindfolded by the diviner.

It was one of the *first* three arrows, to the unmistakeable disappointment of the Yemenees, whose brows lowered as they turned to each other, and muttered whispers of hatred against the Faringees, while the diviner received a purse and retired.

The tyrant of Sana was now pleased to give us a condescending smile, and waved his hand for all to retire, but the vizier and captain of the eunuchs, Ali Badr, and one or two of his more immediate attendants. Langley and I were also about to leave, when Rabd-al-Hoosi, who had been whispering something to the sultan, and looked rather pointedly at me, now summoned us back.

"The sultan, whose footstool is the keystone of earth, would speak with you."

"It would seem," said this benign personage, "that thou knowest, O Kafir, the writings of our Prophet?"

I bowed.

"And know that by the Koran we can make odalisques and wives of all women taken in war; even the wives of unbelieving husbands."

I bowed again, while Solyman continued, but speaking very slow, for his mightiness was somewhat stout and pursy.

"In the celestial purity of my seraglio, I have a silent slave; a woman who has not spoken to me at least for the space of three moons, a miracle such as hath not happened since the days of King Ad; so we know not her language, or what manner of woman she is; but this we know, that she is distinguished for beauty and modesty above all the ladies of my household, (Mohammed forgive me for mentioning them to thee who can know nothing of such things!) but being ignorant of her language, I cannot in any way make her understand the great love I have for her. Our vizier saith that thou art master of more tongues than one, while we (praised be God!) know only that in which the Koran was written. 'Tis well; thou wilt be permitted to approach this silent beauty ——"

"This pearl of the world," murmured the cunning vizier; "this pure emerald of Zaharah!"

"To tell her, if she understands thee, that I love her beyond all the seven hundred women in Hesn-al-Mouhabib, and that I am prepared to raise her to a place which will make her the envy of Arabia, by legalized marriage, the source of all delight! Achieve this, and I will send thee back to Aden, with such treasures, O nakib! as the poor kafirs of thy native island never saw or conceived, even in their dreams; and I will march ten thousand horse and foot to aid the Dola O'Hara in his wars against the Emir Mohamed. Thou understandest me," he added, imperiously, on seeing that I stood with an air of indecision and perplexity on hearing this singular proposition.

"He does, O Imaum," said Rabd-al-Hoosi, coming again to my aid; "who does not hear and understand when the ruler of Asia speaks? He will tell this foolish damsel, that Solyman, whose

slaves are the princes, potentates, emperors, and khaliphs of the earth, and whose favour raises from the dust such as humble themselves before him, has condescended to look upon her with pleasure, and her heart will become glad."

"Exactly—thou hast said!" mumbled the dotard under his snowy beard. "Tell her of the sweet loves of Mujnoon and of Leila the bright-eyed; tell her of the passion that inspired the gallant Khosroo of Persia, and the beautiful Shireen. Say all that thou thinkest will incline her heart to love me, and I will send thee back with such presents as will make my gratitude live for ever in the annals of mankind."

"Imaum," I began with hesitation—"but I may fail—"

"Darest thou speak to me of failure?" asked the querulous sultan, passionately.

"Great Lord, before whom all the Elephants prostrate themselves, the unsainted kafir knows not what he says," said the vizier with alarm.

"Fail?—wallah!" swore the monarch, growing purple in the face with increasing anger.

"Father of unnumbered believers!" said the poor vizier, whose imagination was beginning to fail him; "remember what the thirty-ninth chapter of the Koran sayeth on forgiveness, and forgive him."

"Well, then, Kafir, I forgive thee for daring to express a doubt that my will is law; but remember, if thou failest, *then* will I have thee whipped beyond the Coffee mountains, for having even thought of failure while I expressed my pleasure."

Notwithstanding our isolated situation, my heart swelled with proper anger, and my pride revolted, while the pampered despot spoke in this lawless and petulant manner; but the politic Rabd-al-Hoosi hurried us away to our apartments, where we heard the clash of the cymbals, the vile discordance of the fifes, and the roaring of the gongs, as this infernal old "Turk" retired to his seraglio, like a lion to his den.

I then threw myself upon a sofa to arrange my thoughts, and determine on the course to pursue; but my eyes yet ached with the sunlighted glare of twenty-four painted windows and five hundred gorgeous dresses, and my ears yet tingled with the bombast of Rabd-al-Hoosi, who had invited us to sup with him on that evening.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WE SUP WITH THE VIZIER.

"WELL," he asked, after we had finished supper, which was served up in very good style, "what do you think of your new task?"

"To make love for this venerable alligator?" said Langley, in *English*.

"I detest the price of his alliance with us altogether," said I, remembering Solyman's insolence; "and, moreover, I do not think

that, as a British officer, I am in this bound to humour him—even as Sultan of Sana—"

"Sheikh of Sheikhs," said the vizier, "and King of all the Elephants—"

"Tigers and Hippopotamuses, Father of unnumbered Sons, and many other little *homunculi*," said Langley, in a low voice, as he filled his crystal cup with wine, and gave me a knowing wink; "but think of the reward, my boy!"

"To the devil with the reward," said I; "but I am curious withal to know what it might be."

"His majesty is always weeding out the faded flowers of his seraglio," said the vizier, "and he may bestow some of them upon you, for this is the greatest honour he can give a subject."

I stared at the vizier, who said this with the utmost earnestness; but Fred shouted with laughter, and said,—

"Take care, Hilton, that in making love for Solyman you may not do a little in that way for yourself; it's a way we have in the army, and especially in 'the Queen's Own.'"

At these words (though said in English) the vizier started from his cushions in great alarm, and hastened to see if the last slave, whom he had just dismissed, had closed the doors of walnut-wood, the panels of which were covered with beautiful brasswork. He further secured them by drawing the wooden bolts, and closing the rich damask hangings, which shrouded three sides of the room; but on the fourth, the large-arched windows overlooked the broad and moonlit valley, that stretched away towards Sana; and as rock and rampart descended sheer below them for many hundred feet, no prying eye or ear could reach us from that quarter.

Nothing could be more oriental than the aspect of this chamber, lighted by its pendant lamps of ruby-coloured glass and gold, filled with perfumed oils; its domed roof and hangings of damask, silk, and silver; its Persian carpets and downy cushions; the chibouques and hookah, the flasks and glasses of Venetian crystal, and the gorgeous salvers of luscious fruit, with the bright and joyous moonlight mellowing all without, as we could see distinctly between the festooned curtains and open arches of fretwork that overlooked the valley below.

"As to making love for myself, Fred," said I, referring to his remark, "it will, no doubt, be the last thing I shall think of when in so dangerous a vicinity."

"The thought were worthy of a thousand deaths," said the vizier. "Turn to your Keblah, and pray for strength to carry you through the task."

"My Keblah?"

"I forgot thou art but a Kafir; yet never did even a true believer see the form of one whose beauty had warmed the heart of Solyman, and live."

"But what can I tell, that he has not already told her, in better language?"

"I should think so," said Fred. "An old gentleman with seven hundred wives must always be in good training."

"Say that he will love her as the Prophet did Kadijah the widow; that he will be faithful to her, as the same Holy One was to Ayesha."

"In neither case promising much, if history be true."

The vizier laughed, and from under his rich Angora shawl produced two very respectable black bottles, which he eyed affectionately between him and the light, and then handed them to me.

"Brandy—French brandy!" said I, looking at the seal.

"It is admirable!" said he, in Arabic; "I gave a hundred piastres for some cases that were taken from the stranded ship *Minerva*, of London, for it is wicked to waste the good things of this earth while the Prophet permits us to enjoy them; so, out with the corks, and let us be merry."

Fred produced one of those compendious pocket-knives, which, with a gunscrew, horsepicker, boothook, &c., generally have a corkscrew; and with this the corks were out in a twinkling. Water was flowing like crystal from the mouth of a silver head into a marble basin in a corner of the apartment; our cups were soon filled, emptied, and filled again, while we lay at ease, with our necks open and vests unbuttoned, among the soft cushions, chatting, laughing, and smoking our cool hookahs through crimson vases of perfumed water. As, on the former occasion, we had no more quotations from the Koran, and no more of Rabd-al-Hoosi's obtrusive piety, but we had jokes, stories, and wild legends of encounters with the Futhalis and the Bedouins, till, as the brandy diminished in the *second* bottle, the prime minister of the Corner-stone of Wisdom grew a little uproarious, and insisted on having a song, and in proposing it, made a speech, in which he mingled his guttural Arabic with an absurd sprinkling of English. Langley, who never required very much pressing for anything, commenced at once his favourite hunting song about "The High-mettled Racer," to which the vizier listened with eyes half-closed, as he lay back among his **luxurious cushions**, and beat time with the amber mouth of his hookah on the palm of his hand, and with the heel of his slipper on the floor.

It was now Fred's turn to request, and he insisted vehemently on Rabd-al-Hoosi favouring us with an Arab ditty, and after brief pressing, and filling his glass, he wiped his beard, and while fixing upon *me* his keen eyes, the white iris of which dilated, to our unbounded astonishment he began, in the purest native dialect,

"O Willie brewed a peck o' maut,
And Rab and Allan cam to prie;
Three blither lads, that lee-lang night,
Ye wadna fand in Christendie.

We are na fou, we're na that fou,
 But just a wee drap in our e'e;
 The cock may crawl, the day may daw,
 But aye we'll taste the barley bree!

"Here are we met, three merry boys,
 Three merry boys I trow are we," &c. &c.

While the vizier sung, it would be impossible to depict by pen or pencil the expression of blank astonishment, almost fright, which Fred's face reflected from mine, on hearing him sing thus, and sing with admirable spirit, too. We were too much wonder-struck to laugh; but though the song was lively, tears filled the eyes of the pseudo-Moslem, and with the last line, a kind of sob burst from him, as he flung away the tube of his hookah, and grasping my hands, said,

"I could conceal myself no longer—I am a Scotsman—your countryman—God bless you both! O sirs! there's nae place like hame, as the Deil said, when he got into the Court of Session."

"And your name, Rabd-al-Hoosi?"

"Rabbie Dalhousie, I was called at home, in my native parish of Birkenshaw—the transition is easy."

"But why conceal yourself so long?" I asked.

"Because I thought you were both Englishmen, and I cared not to make myself known; for the last to whom I spoke, and for whom I did many an act of kindness, abused and ridiculed my country, for which expression of gratitude I gave him three hundred blows of a cane on the soles of his feet. But I soon detected *you*, Mr. Hilton, by the broad sound of your *a's* in the Arabic; moreover, I heard you lilting an old ditty, which brought my heart to my head in a moment, for no tongue but a Scottish one can *lilt*."

"Your story must be a very remarkable one."

"A very sad one, too, Mr. Hilton, for I have known what it is to weep the *last* tears of sorrow. Will you believe it, only a few years ago I was between the stilts of a plough turning up the fallow earth on the bonnie rigs of Birkenshaw, wearing a blue-bonnet on my brow, and on my breast the red plush waistcoat my sweetheart had flowered for me; and to-night I am prime minister to Solyman of Sana—the *potent* and the *wise*—God forgive me for saying so."

"If we may inquire," said Langley, "what peculiar turn of the wheel of fortune threw you into this remote corner of the world?"

"You may, sir—you may; I care not if I tell you, for my story may be known one day, like that of Tommy Keith, the gunsmith, of Auld Reekie, who is now styled Ibrahim Aga, Governor of Medina, and a Pacha of Three Tails, being lord of one of the noblest territories in the Pachalick of Egypt. If there is another drop of brandy left, drain it off, and I will tell you how I, the ploughman Rabbie Dalhousie came to be *Rabd-al-Hoosi*, the envied Vizier of Yemen."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE HISTORY OF RABD-AL-HOOSI.

"MY father, honest old Davie Dalhousie, occupied the farm toun and mains of Dryburngrange, in the parish of Birkenshaw, through which flows the Tweed; and in all its long course of ninety miles from its source, it passes no sweeter spot than that dear place where first I saw the light, and learned to think the pastoral hills of Peebles and the broomy knowes of Traquair the boundaries of this terrestrial world. We had farmed the mains for five generations under the noble house of Traquair; my father was an elder of the kirk, and had the reputation of being a quiet, discreet, and upright auld carle—even as my good mother bore the character of being a kind and thrifty wife, and the best manager of kirk, spence, and byre between the Leithen and the Annan. I was an only son, and christened Robert, after poor Robbie Burns; and I am a little proud of my name, for it has been borne by seven of our Scottish poets, and by three of our kings,—one of them the bravest that ever drew a sword for God and a people's freedom!

"It was the greatest ambition of my mother—puir body—to see me, her only son, a minister, whose head should wag in the pulpit of the parish kirk, for we had great hopes that way through the patron, our lord the earl, who, though he was a catholic noble, Lord of Linton and Caberston, Earl of Traquair, and I know not what more, was ever kind and condescending—took a snuff from my father's mull when he met him, and asked anent the crops, and the calving of the last cow; but my father—gudeman—was resolved that his son should be a farmer like his ancestors before, and earn his bread as the blessed Koran—toots! the Scripture, I mean—commanded, by the sweat of his brow, on the green mains and golden corn-rigs, which had been sown and reaped, as I have said, by five generations of the Dalhousies,—yea, ever since the time when the good Sir William Stuart of Caberston and Traquair brooked the Constabulary of Dumbarton under his Majesty James VI., as my poor mother has told me with honest pride many a time and oft; for I am come of that glorious Scottish peasantry, who were ever ready to defend and die for the and their titled lords have ever been the first to sell and to betray. Besides, he had many scruples anent the abomination of patronage; and two of our family, who, in the times of trouble, had engaged in the preaching line, ended their lives in great tribulation; for one died in the dungeons of the Bass Rock, and was flung into sea; the other testified at the Bowfoot of Edinburgh, and now he sleeps close by it, in that spot which no true Scotsmen ever looked on without feeling his heart stirred within him—the *martyrs' tomb*—in the Greyfriars' Yard. With all that, my father was near taking to the

preaching himself, when he joined the Free Kirk at the Disruption, and had the honour to become a correspondent even with the great Chalmers. After obtaining all that our village dominie could teach me—a plain Scottish education, with a smack of the humanities, astronomy, and algebra—I gave up all thought of the kirk, took to my ploughstils and spade like a man, and our wee bit farm throve bravely under my care, with the assistance of a sturdy grieve, Jock Adamson—puir man!—many a night the schule-callants and I half smothered him and his gudewife, Mysie, by putting a divot on his lumheid when the gathering peat was a-low!

"I had a good saddle-horse, and had the reputation of being one of the smartest young lads on Tweed-side, when I rode to Peebles market with my red plush waistcoat that *somebody* had worked for me with her ain bonnie hands; my blue Sunday coat, and a bonnet of my mother's weaving, with a red cherry on the top, a bab of blue ribbons at my lug, where *somebody* had pinned them, and my silver-shanked whip, that had been left me as a dying gift by my uncle, a sergeant of our auld Scots Greys of glorious achievement, and which he had received on parade from his colonel, the gallant Sir James Stuart, the auld laird of Coltness.

"I was ever fond of good company, and could handle a horse or a pack of cards as well as any man; could stand my pint stoup, sing a song, kiss a bonnie lass, and dance at a Kirn or Halloween with the best chield in the country; and a proud man was I when, at a ball on the green, the auld ground Bailie of Traquair brought me an invitation to dance with the countess herself, before the whole tenantry, while opposite stood the good old earl, with *somebody* the bonniest less in all Tweed-side or Teviotdale.

"This was sweet wee Elsie Logan; my poor Elsie! I think I see her now, in her short-striped gown and blue skirt; her brown hair smoothly snooded with a blue ribbon; her cheeks glowing like peaches, and her hazel eyes that were ever so bright and merry. Her brother's farm was at the Moat of Ellon, on the opposite side of the burn, and we had loved each other long—ay, from the days when we sat on the same form and spelled over the same page at school, sharing our sweatmeats and Saturday-halfpence together. But my father, douce man! could never abide the thought of such an alliance; for though he readily admitted the beauty and worth of Elsie, he knew that her brother, who managed—or rather mismanaged—the small farm of Ellon, was over head and ears in debt; and that as we had enough to do to keep our own heads above the brae, I should look for a wife in another direction.

"Elsie's brother Ringan was a careless, convivial, devil-may-care kind of fellow, who better loved to ramble over the lea with a gun in his hand and a pointer at his heels, than to plough up the heavy rigs of Ellon: and he was often found by the Tweed-side, with his salmon leister and fishing-rod, or at the Traquair Arms, with dice and cards,

when there was corn to stalk, potatoes to pit, and beans to thresh ; and the upshot was, that he lost his lease ; his stock was roused by order of the sheriff, and a doleful day it was for me when I saw the auctioneer's red flag flying at the old Moat of Ellon. Everything was sold—bed and table, saut-kit and meal-ark, girdle and clock, pot and cruik—woe is me ! every stick and stool of the plenishing. My father bought the horses and carts, and the very sight of them coming over the brig at the burn went to my heart like a rifle-shot, for it told me of the ruin that had come upon the lassie I loved—and I loved her brother Ringan, too, for he was a warm-hearted and well-meaning, but fearfully reckless, chield.

“ ‘I aye said that prodigal callant's conduct would bring him to the husks and the swine-trough,’ said my father, with a triumphant look at me, as he hung his whip and spats behind the parlour door ; ‘like a horse after a feed, he was gaeing owre fast to gang far !’

“ ‘Father,’ said I, ‘you are an elder of the kirk, and should be merciful.’

“ ‘Mercy, indeed ; the ne'er-do-well ! He has this day lost a farm whilk the Logans have brookit for four generations. My certie ! it is weel that his father's head is below the grass in the auld kirkyard. The ruin of this day would have broken his heart—honest man.’

“My mother said she was sorry for the pair lassie Elsie, but doubtless some kind friend would take her to service at the next Burrowtown.

“ ‘Service !’

“My heart was in my mouth at these cruel words, and drawing my bonnet on my brow, I strode away to the Pechtstane, our usual place of tryst.

“This Pechtstane—a great rough obelisk of the Roman times, marking, as our dominie told me, the spot where the Scots defeated in battle the *last* of these invaders—formed the march between our farms, and stood on the muirland just midway from Dryburngrange to the old thatched house, that was built among the green mounds of the Moat of Ellon. Oh, I would give my inmost heart's blood for one glimpse of them now ; but I see them all yet, in memory !

“Round the grey Pechtstane the purple blaeberry and the red ranberry spotted the moss and heather ; laden with honey, the bee hummed on the soft air of evening ; the saffron sun was sinking behind the brown hills of Peebles : the black muircock, the plover and curlew were wheeling aloft, while the dun partridge whirled far down below. The red rowan bunches, the green alders, and the sorrowful sauch-trees shaded the drowsy linn that gurgled at the brae-foot ; and there, in that place sae sweet to think, ‘o'love when the kye cam hame,’ my dear lassie awaited me.”

The Vizier of Sana paused for a moment, as his eyes and his heart filled together ; and it is impossible for me to convey an adequate idea of the strong contrast formed by the homely Scottish style into which

he had so suddenly and so naturally slid, and by his Eastern aspect and attire, his embroidered vest and diamond-hilted cimitar, his jewelled turban and bearded visage.

"As I approached," he resumed, "I saw that my dear Elsie was weeping bitterly, and that a man, who wore a sky blue bonnet, with a white tuft on it, was stealing stealthily away from beside her, and wending his way up the bank of the Quair, towards the slope of the orae, where stand the fine old birchen trees so famed in song and love as the *Bush aboon Traquair*."

"This was a rival—John Kippilaw—a water bailie, who watched the Tweed for poachers, and who had now presumed to offer himself to Elsie, believing that in her adversity and distress she might listen to him favourably; but she had repulsed him as he deserved, for these water bailies were hated by all the country people, as a class of petty tyrants, informers, and infringers of the common rights of men, who by fine and imprisonment caused the total ruin of mony a poor lad for taking a salmon out of the river that flowed past his own cottage door."

"My poor Elsie threw herself into my arms, and there she wept long and sorrowfully. I said all I could think of to reassure her, and we arranged that I would endeavour to get a small farm of my own, or that I would hire myself as a grievie on a neighbouring estate, or do anything that would enable me to marry her in moderate comfort; and that, come weal or woe, we should married be at Martinmas next."

"And so communing together we walked over the muir, with my arm and my grey plaid about her, until the red glooming deepened on the hills, and the glow-worms glimmered in the moss, when I left her at the door of a small cottage, near the Quair—a place her brother had rented, as he said, 'until he could look about him.'

"This he never did, but went from bad to worse, and almost broke the poor lassie's heart; and though my father and mother mourned for her, and did many a kind act, such as sending her a cheese, a pair of braxy hams, a basket of eggs, or a farl of barley cakes at an orra time, they were mair opposed to our marriage than ever. Martinmas drew nigh, and I had not even a bodle in my pocket. I was almost demented, for the roses had now left the cheeks of my Elsie; her hazel eyes were sad and red, and her dear wee hands were soiled and sore with the menial work she had to perform."

"Her brother Ringan drank to drown care, diced to make money, and usually kept the whole town in an uproar. He was suspected o leaguering with the poacher gangs of Innerleithen and elsewhere, and was often accused of shooting the earl's deer and other game; or netting the hares and dragging the Tweed, and was supposed to sell fish, fowl, and deer to the carriers who went north towards the capital, but such could never be proved, though the gamekeeper's dogs, and that sharp fellow, Kippilaw, the water bailie, had often tracked a man

Kippilaw measure his length on the causeway. The people now became frantic, and swept all before them; the game-keepers and water-bailies, and the whole of the invaders were fain to fly for their lives, and I carried off Ringan in my empty cart. The ball had passed through his arm, but the wound soon healed, and for a time he concealed himself by lurking in our barns and hay-lofts by night, and by day in the vaults of the old castle of Horseburgh; but as soon as his strength and health were fully restored, he began to take measures for vengeance upon Kippilaw, for he had sworn a terrible oath, 'to tear out his heart, and dash it in his face!'

"Many warrants were out for his apprehension as a poacher and *vagrant*. I thought that word would have broken the heart of my poor forlorn Elsie. Sanders Sneckdrawer being a country writer was a fearful vindictive body, and he too had sworn a solemn oath—not upon the Gospels, for it was but little he cared for them, but upon 'Erskine's Institutes,' and 'Dirlton's Doubts,'—that he would be revenged for his unseemly drouking in the market-cross well, and for the riot within his burgh.

"From the moment his blood had been drawn, Ringan sought every occasion to meet Kippilaw in some lonely place. He was a tall and handsome fellow, Ringan, with a straight nose, deep dark eyes, and brows that met over them in one arched line; but oh! he had a frightful expression in them when angry, and when he gnashed his teeth at the name of Kippilaw. He had long imbibed a sworn vengeance against the game-laws, and was wont to say that the beasts of the forest, the birds of the air, and the fish of the streams, belonged to the people, for God had given to *them* the land they inhabited, and not to earls, lairds, or esquires; and that all the soil produced belonged to the people, who should just shoot their landlords if they were not allowed to shoot the game.

"I shook my head at this poacher logic; for I knew that he referred to the earl's deer, the Laird of Horseburgh's grouse, the Gude-man of Pirn's pheasants, and the Bailie of St. Ronan's trout and salmon.

"'Rents, revenue, and taxes, all go south to London,' he would say at times, 'and nothing returns to poor old Scotland; tyranny and centralization have robbed us of the best gifts of God; and we have nothing now but bungled acts of Parliament, insult, and neglect, poor-law, game-law, and police-law—'

"'And a Kippilaw,' I added, pawkily; and then he got up with a *clang*, and snatching his salmon spear, went boldly out in open day to one of the pools on the Leithen. As he strode away, Elsie gave me an imploring glance, so much as to say, 'stay him, dear Robbie, if you can!' But Ringan was not a man to be stayed when the devil within him was roused, and so he proudly went his way to seek a supper, which he generally cooked, in pure spite, by the painted boards that were placed in every thicket, warning poachers and trespassers with the terrors of the hateful *law*; and close at his heels

went his faithful white pointer, for which he had various suits of black, spotted, and liver-coloured clothing, so that by game-keepers he was seldom seen, to all appearance, twice attended by the *same* dog; and this sagacious quadruped had learned to poach too, for when he eyed a bright scaly salmon, in a smooth sandy place, he would plunge in, and come up with the fish in his mouth, and then run off, wagging his tail, to hide the quarry in a thicket, or among the long grass for his errant and wandering master.

"I sat beside my sad and sorrowful Elsie, with her head on my shoulder, my cheek on her cold white brow, and my arms around her; a grief oppressed us both that night; a dark foreboding of approaching evil; one of those solemn and superstitious presentiments of coming *dùle* to which the minds of the Scots, like other large-brained races, are subject at times. From what this mysterious emotion and influence sprung, God who creates us only knows.

"We spoke little, and for hours remained with our thoughtful eyes fixed on the changing embers of the fire, that glowed on the cottage ingle. Martinmas had come and gone, and we were not yet married! Elsie had grown thin and wan, for her health and spirits were broken, and both were failing her fast.

"The night without was dark and dreary; the cold sky was inky-grey, and the clouds were gathering in huge masses on the distant hills; the wind whistled through the scroggy glen, and the red lightning gleamed behind the shattered peel of Horseburgh, while here and there large flakes of snow began to fall.

"In the corner, an old wag-at-the-wa' struck eleven.

"'*Eleven!*' said Elsie, bursting into tears; 'eleven, and Ringan's no cum hame yet. O Robbie, something dreadful maun hae happened the nicht!'

"At that moment a sound made me look towards the window, and there I saw a face whiter than the visage of a corpse peering into the half-darkened cottage; but by the faint gleam of the dying fire, and by the horseshoe eyebrow, I knew the face of Ringan. He made an impressive motion that meant *silence*, and then earnestly beckoned to me.

"'Oh, what can all this mean!' thought I.

"Saying to Elsie, that I would just take my bonnet and rin doon the loan to the Kailyard-end, and halloo on Ringan, I left her, and came out of the cottage with a beating heart and a spirit sorely troubled, for I was deeply concerned for Ringan, and my inmost soul mourned for my Elsie.

"'Robbie, oh, Robbie! come this way—quick—for God's sake, quick!' said Ringan, in a hoarse whisper, as he seized me by the coat-neuck, and urged me along the road to where the dark figure of a man's body lay extended on the ground. My heart ceased to beat! my blood grew cold at the sight—the light seemed to go out of my eyes; and I grasped the divots of the fealdyke, to keep me from falling, for the horror I experienced quite overcame me.

who was mair like Ringan than his wraith could be, from the river to the muirlands; but as country folk ever make common cause with poachers, he always eluded the fangs of the law, until one dolefu night which I shall never forget.

"Enraged by Elsie's rejection of his suit, Kippilaw had sworn to be revenged, and kept a sharp eye upon the movements of her misguided and ill-starred brother; thus, on a night when he and some other enterprising lads, with their torches and salmon leisters, were caught in the act of spearing fish in one of the finest pools on the Leithen, Kippilaw blew his horn; a band of his myrmidons started out of bush and brake. Then Ringan Logan and four other desperate fellows flung their torches into the stream, and as the night was dark, they broke through the water-bailies with their spears, and fled towards the hills. They were soon pursued by more than twenty men, on horse and foot, county police, game-keepers, and water-bailies, armed with batons, cudgels, pistols and double-barrelled rifles. The chase was close and desperate. Thrice they took to the water and thrice to the hills, to baffle their pursuers but in vain, for the splendid bribes of the adjacent proprietors spurred their tormentors on, and at last they were driven into the town of St. Ronan, just about mid-day. Here most of the population sympathised with them, and a terrible riot ensued. The kirk bell tolled an alarm, the town drum was beaten, and the St. Ronan's men sallied out upon the water-bailies with whatever weapons came first to hand.

"I had come into market that day with a load of grain, and shall never forget the hurly-burly. Coats, hats, bonnets, grey border mauds, all went to wreck and ruin; eyes were blackened, noses bled, and heads broken; women were skirling, bairns howling, dogs barking, and men swearing; while sticks, batons, flails, and pitchforks, were whirling in the air; and there, in the midst of it all, were Sanders Sneckdrawer, the auld baron-bailie of St. Ronan's, collared by his gold civic chain, and surrounded by the town officers, with their shining halberts, striving to keep the Queen's peace, and threatening to send to the lord advocate for the cavalry; but the halberts were broken, the Riot Act torn, and the bailie was tumbled head foremost into a horse-trough that stood beside the market-cross.

"In the midst of it all was Ringan Logan, drenched in blood that was flowing from his mouth and nose, with his clothes torn to rags, fighting like a Turk or a wild beast—yet like a brave fellow withal—to free himself from the iron grasp of the malignant Kippilaw, who soon lost all command of himself, and rashly drawing a pistol from his belt, fired!

"I heard the report, and the yell from the mob that followed it; and when the smoke cleared away, the right arm of poor Ringan hung powerless by his side.

"'Coward!' I cried, and by one blow of my cart-whip, made

"Ringan had been wandering up the Leithen with his leister; he had speared three great salmon, and was just about to launch his weapon at a fourth, as, in the last flush of the red glooming that came down the long green glen, he saw its silver scales shining among the dark-brown pebbles, when a voice behind him shouted,

"Surrender, ye fause loon!"

"He turned, and saw the vindictive Kippilaw, with his well-known sky-blue bonnet, close by him, and levelling the *same* pistol straight at his head.

"Surrender!" said Ringan, with a fierce and scornful laugh; 'and in whose name, I wad like to ken?'

"In the name of the Baron-bailie of St. Ronan, and the law which I represent.'

"The laws were made by the rich to grind and oppress the poor, for that which is law for one is often not law for the other; but beware, John Kippilaw!" said Ringan, with one of his fearful scowls, 'for ye may find 'a man's a man for a' that,' and I would rather die ten times than yield to the law, or to such a dirty, paid-living body as you, a false coward, who levelled a loaded pistol at a poor unarmed man.'

"Kippilaw gave a wicked laugh, and drew nearer, with his pistol rocked.

"Let him laugh loud who laughs *last*,' said Ringan, as he charged his salmon spear, and stood on his defence. Whether by design or mischance, I know not, but at that moment the pistol of Kippilaw exploded, and the ball passed through Ringan's bonnet. Wild with passion and fury he rushed upon the aggressor, and whirling his spear aloft, brought down its ponderous iron head in full swing upon the unfortunate Kippilaw. It struck him on the left temple; he fell by the water-side as if shot, and never moved again. He was dead—slain by Ringan's hand—by the hand of Elsie's only brother!

"I will not attempt to describe his emotions when the gust of passion passed away, though I could very well comprehend them by the terror, shame, and crushing bitterness of my own.

"His first idea was to rush to St. Ronan's, and deliver himself up to the bailie—even to the cruel Sanders Sneckdrawer—as a murderer; or, at least, as one who had committed a slaughter in his own defence; but who would believe the story of the poor vagrant—of the outlawed poacher? None! It would be madness.

"Then he thought of his sweet sister, and of the shame and sorrow his trial and punishment would bring upon her; and then, last of all, he thought of his personal safety—for the love of life is strong and instinctive within us; and thus, afraid to trust the body out of his sight, he had hidden it among the bracken bushes till the darkness set in, and then had carried it on his back almost to his cottage door, for his once strong mind was a mere chaos now; he knew little of what he did, and still less of what to do.

"'Oh, speak to me, Robbie Dalhousie, speak to me for *her* sake,' said he, with one of those deep breast-bursting sobs that can only come from a swollen heart; 'where shall I hide this fearful' load o' guilt?"

"I could scarcely reply, for my tongue had forgotten its office; but Ringan proposed that we should bury the body in the old sand-pits that lay about half a mile distant up the hill side. I got a shovel in the kailyard; we put the body into a plaid, and bore it away, and but for its weight, I would have thought myself in some fearful dream, as with tottering knees, a brow bathed in cold perspiration, and a deadly sickness in my heart, I staggered up the bleak and lone hill side—lone indeed, save when we roused the wild fumaart from its lair among the waving bracken, or the wilder gled, and the ravenous hoodiecrow from devouring their carrion among the sable broom; on—on we went to the old pits, around the mouths of which the black-whin bushes waved in solemn and gloomy tufts, and there we buried him, batted down the sods, and brushed them with a branch of sauch-tree, as we had seen the grave-diggers do in the kirkyard.

"During these operations my bonnet fell off; I was half blind with terror, and had a search to recover it; but I put it on my head, shuddering as I did so, for it was wet with blood—cold and horrible—the blood of a murdered man.

"To be brief, I advised poor Ringan to fly the kingdom and get into England; I gave him my purse, and pocket-book with a ten pound Bank of Scotland note in it; I gave him also my siller watch. He prayed me to comfort Elsie, and to protect her. I called Heaven to witness that I would do so faithfully. He wept like a child, and as strong men only weep, and then he struck across the hills to reach the railway that runs by Galasheils to Berwick.

"As if it was an instrument of crime, I flung the shovel into a deep moss-hagg, and hurried back to the cottage and to Elsie.

"She had fallen asleep—puir lassie—on the warm ingle seat. The fire had gone out. I would have kissed her; but though innocent, I felt as one steeped in guilt and crime, and dared not by a touch to profane one so pure and so sorrow-stricken.

"Oh, that I had kissed her; for how little knew I then that this look of her was to be my last! I knelt down in a dark corner, and taking off my bonnet, wept while I prayed God to comfort and protect her—to strengthen and direct me; and thus grey morning, as it stole down the long and grassy glen, found me in that poor clay-floored cottage, wretched, sleepless, and wan. Loath to leave the poor and sleeping girl, and dreading to be found absent from my father's farm when the stable lads took their horses to water in the morning, I looked to the hill-top, where the broom was waving, and shuddered, for *he* that I knew of, was lying there.

"Had the crown and sceptre of Scotland been mine, I would have given them freely that this horrible night had never passed!

"I looked forward with fear and anguish to Elsie's sorrow and my father's ungenerous triumph, or stern satisfaction, *now*, for having steadily opposed our marriage.

"Resolving to come back when I was more composed, I stole away, and, softly closing the latch, crossed the burn at the Peckstone, vaulted over the feal-dykes, and was first among the stables. The morning sun was yet grey, and I saw our carter lads whispering together, and looking at me from time to time in a strange and suspicious-like manner; but my heart was sunk—my spirit gone—and instead of laying my whip across their shoulders, as I would have done yesterday, I cowered before them like a beaten hound or collie-dog.

"A cart of beans stood ready laden for the market, and as any employment was preferable to remaining idle, I sprang upon the off-tram, whipped up the horse, and drove away towards the town just as the warm sun came up in his yellow splendour in the east. The morning mist was rolling through the glens; the sparrow chirruped on the green hedges; but alake! my heart was sad and timorous.

"Several persons who passed me on the road looked at me, as our servants had done, in a manner which I thought very peculiar; but I reached St. Ronan's without molestation, and drew up my cart in the market-place, put up the tramstick, and took my horse to stable at the *Traquair Arms*, where, telling the landlady I was unwell, I called for a stoup of whisky, and drained the gill at a mouthful.

"I now thought of taking a survey of myself in a mirror which hung over the mantelpiece; and then, how shall I describe the tremulous horror that came over me, to find that I had on my head the blood-stained bonnet—the well-known *sky-blue bonnet*—of the murdered Kippilaw, with its white worsted tuft!

"I tore it from my head, and was standing like one transfixed, when the door of the room opened, and a sergeant of the county police—a man whom I knew well—appeared, and sternly he looked at me! His figure is yet before me, for deeply did the terrors of that hour impress it upon my memory. He was a burly, red-whiskered man, wearing a blue double-breasted surtout, with large brass buttons having thistles on them, and the earl's crest, a crow on a wreath, and three gold chevrons on each arm.

"'Robert Dalhousie,' said he 'give me that bonnet.'

"I gave it to him mechanically.

"'It is John Kippilaw's bonnet, and covered with dried blood, too! Do ye ken this one?' he added, sternly, shewing me my own, which had my name written on the lining—*Rob. Dalhousie, Farmer, Dryburngrange*.

"My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth!

"'Speak, ye dyvour loon!' said the sergeant, fiercely; 'did you tyne your bonnet on the hills last night?'

"'I did,' said I.

"'Where?' he asked, taking another step towards me.

"'I dinna ken.'

“‘Shall I tell you?’ he asked, with a scowl.

“I made no reply.

“‘At daylight this morning, I came across the muirland with two of our men and a collie-dog. As we passed a moss-hagg we found a spade, lying half sunk in the water, there were blood-spots on one side of the handle, and on the other, *R. Logan*, burned by an iron brand. Passing the sand-pits we found the bonnet—*yours*—with spots of blood upon it too, and there were gouts of gore upon the trampled grass. The collie ran snuffing about, and then began to scrape and tear up the turf with his fore-paws; our suspicions were roused; we dug—the earth was loose and soft—a dead, human face appeared, and ye ken the rest owre weel, Robert Dalhousie.’

“I groaned, and hid my face in my hands.

“‘We found the body of Kippilaw, the water bailie, murdered, bluidy, and covered with gore! Oh, ye vile rascal, to bring disgrace and sorrow on your father’s grey hairs, and shame and slander on a’ our quiet neighbourhood, by such an act as this!’

“‘He who says I slew John Kippilaw is a liar and a loon!’ said I, furiously, while springing up and striving to break from the sergeant and his men; but many strong hands were laid upon me; I was secured with irons, and marched through the crowded market-place, exposed to the scornful, malignant, or pitying eyes of all, as the ‘hateful murderer o’ puir John Kippilaw.’

“That night I was an inmate of the Tolbooth; a precognition took place before the Procurator Fiscal, and I was fully committed to stand trial for murder, while the *two bonnets* were carefully sealed up in the office of Sanders Sneckdrawer, to be adduced against me on that awful day when the Lords of Justiciary came on the circuit.

“My poor old father—that stern and upright, yet kind and venerable elder of the kirk—came to see me in the Tolbooth, but he said only three word, ‘ruin—disgrace—infamy!’ and wept like a bairn the bitter tears of age, as he hid his face, so pale and wan with misery, in his broad blue bonnet. My gentle and tender mother was unable to come, she was too ill; and Elsie—dear, dear, desolate Elsie—she had been seized by a fever and was delirious; and *who* was consoling—who comforting her? None.

“I thought my brain would turn! .

“Several years have passed since then; and for these years I have gone down the stream of time like rushes on a mountain flood; but never will the bitterness, the mortification, and anguish I endured while within the walls of that grim and old Tolbooth be forgotten. All believed me guilty save my parents and my poor feeble Elsie. I had been imprisoned a month, and now the eventful day of trial drew near, for I heard the trampling of horses, and the sounding of the Exchequer trumpets in the street as the Lords of the Circuit came; but I was determined, that though I should die in attempting to escape, never to brook the shame of a public trial; for, resolving that I would not criminate the brother of Elsie, I never explained

the affair of the bonnets, or how the head gear of Kippilaw came to be worn by me.

"At the hope of freedom and of baffling my persecutors (for so I viewed all connected with the prosecution), I took courage anew, and examined my prison. It was an arched cell, with a door of iron. The floor was of stone slabs, and one of these lay immediately under the before-mentioned iron door. I stamped with my feet, and the placed below seemed hollow!

"On that night, after being inspected and locked up, the moment I was alone I set about the task of breaking up the floor. The only instrument I had to assist me was an iron heel, twisted off one of my boots; but by dint of picking out the mortar, I succeeded in completely disengaging the ponderous slab. With a beating heart I drew it from its bed, and joyously—if such a heart as mine was then could feel a joyous glow—I found the cold air rushing on my face. The breach opened into one of the large fresh-air funnels which were formed for conveying a pure current through the great hall into which the cells of all the prisoners opened. Into this trough, or dry drain, I crept, and, feet foremost, reached the outer wall, where it terminated in iron crossbars, the ends of which the effect of the weather and the poisonous nature of the lead by which they were secured to the stone, had almost eaten through, then, by one vigorous blow of my feet I burst the grating out, and my heart died within me when I heard it fall with a clatter down below; but no time was to be lost! Emerging, heels foremost, from the funnel, I dropped, from the points of my fingers, into a garden which belonged to the captain of the Tolbooth. This was fortunate! Had I fallen into the paved yard, I might have broken some bones, while the boundary wall was so high that, at all events, I must have remained there until daybreak, and been locked up more securely than ever.

"I soon cleared the garden wall, dived up one close and down another, crossed the Back Wynd, and after pausing for a time, and debating whether or not to take shelter in the Templar Land, which was still a twenty-four hour's sanctuary (but for debtors only), just as the bell of St. Ronan's Kirk tolled twelve, I went through the burgh like a hunted todlowrie, and took the road directly to my father's house.

"All I wished for was to see them—father, mother, and Elsie—once more, and then fly the country.

"Day dawned before I reached Dryburngrange, and stole into the garden like a thief. There I saw the poor old man sitting on a divot-seat in the sunshine, near the bees'-binks, looking sadly at the opening flowers, like one who pondered with himself whether he would be spared to see another spring. He concealed me among the hay in a loft, and there I lurked anxiously during the whole of that long, long day, trembling at every sound, and believing that every horseman who galloped past, that every voice I heard in the field, and that every dog barking on the muirland, where in pursuit of me.

"My Elsie was now asleep in the auld kirkyard, she had died—yea, died, sirs, of sorrow and of hunger—in a Christian and civilized country!

"Night came at last, and under its friendly shadow I prepared to fly. I shaved off every vestige of whisker and beard; I cut short my eyebrows, which were somewhat shaggy. I shaved part of my temples, too, for I had grown somewhat cunning by associating with the hellicate inmates of the Tolbooth. I put on a suit of clean stable clothing, received five pounds from my poor father, and mounting the stoutest horse we had, after many tears and much sorrow, I rode off on my solitary way.

"The night was bleak and rainy, and I galloped on in great fear, a moaning sound came over the lonely muirs upon the skirt of the gusty wind, and the sauch trees waved mournfully over every burn and linn. Then the rain fell in torrents; but I knew every foot of the lonely Drove-road I travelled, and crossing the counties of Selkirk and Roxburgh, with daylight saw the brown hills of Northumberland rise before me. With dawn the gloom passed away; the chirruping of the sparrows announced that the rain would soon cease, and the sun rise; and when it rose, my heart grew lighter. On a solitary moor, just on the borders of England, I dismounted, and gave the horse a lash with my whip, and he set off at full gallop on the road home. Dryburngrange was thirty miles distant, but I knew that Roger would go back every foot of the way to his stable, and my eyes and my heart followed the poor animal as he galloped over the path I could never more pursue!

"I reached London, and being a good horseman, and having considerable veterinary skill, I soon obtained a situation as groom to an officer of cavalry whose regiment was stationed in India. We were two years in London, for my master was on leave, and when it expired he set out to join, by the overland route, and took me with him; for he found me invaluable, and I purchased for him all the provisions, sherry, Madeira, brandy, hermetically sealed bouilli or ox-tail soup, candles, canteen, powder and shot, cooking utensils, camp-table, chairs, and apparatus, for the long and arduous journey overland to India; not forgetting pistols and umbrellas for both of us, with green gauze goggles, blankets and cloaks, mizzapour rugs and travelling beds (double of course) with mosquito curtains.

"We had as much baggage as if we were about to found a colony like William Penn, instead of merely joining a regiment of dragoons, and as we proceeded leisurely, the expense was enormous.

"From London we proceeded to Rotterdam, from thence to Zurich, and travelled through the most beautiful scenery to Milan, and from thence to Florence and Rome. Travelling by the Appian Way we reached Naples without having one adventure either with ladies or brigands, to the great disappointment of my master. Crossing Sicily, we arrived at Alexandria, and put up at the hotel of an Italian Jew, who bought all our dollars at ten piastres each, though

they were worth eighteen. From thence we travelled by camels to the miserable clay built town of Suez.

"On the night of our arrival this place was in a fearful state of uproar. A regiment of kilted Arnaouts in the service of the Pacha of Egypt had marched in, and being displeased with the arrangements of their commissary, the moment their tents were pitched outside the town, they made a clean sweep of everything eatable and drinkable within it, bayoneting all in the shops and bazaars who were rash enough to oppose them.

"They relieved our host of all his Spanish dollars, and were carrying off my master's canisters of ox-tail and cases of sherry and Madeira, when he madly drew a pistol from his belt and shot one dead. I now thought my life was forfeited; it was worse than the affair of Kippilaw, the water bailie! A dozen ferocious Arnaouts rushed upon us with bayonets charged, when a tall and stately officer, whose white kilt, blue velvet cap, jacket and sandals were blazing with gold and embroidery, dashed up their muskets with his sabre, and drove them back; and in this Greek officer, notwithstanding his voluminous black beard, and enormous moustaches, which were twisted up to his eyes, I recognised—whom think you? Ringan Logan, the brother of my Elsie—and the source of all my troubles!

"He had gone to sea in a Berwick ship, and sailed for the Levant. There he quarreled with his captain, and after beating him almost to death with a handspike, had deserted to the coast of Greece and joined these Arnaouts, then just embarking for Egypt, where his reckless bravery had attracted the attention of Prince Mavrovuni, their colonel, who soon procured him the rank of captain. He wished me to remain with him, but I had seen too much of his new friends to care for seeing more, and bade him farewell. He restored to my master all that his soldiers had taken, and placed us in safety on board the Indian steamer. We sailed next day, but not without danger, for the rascally Arnaouts of Mavrovuni who rambled along the quay amused themselves by firing off their ball ammunition at the passengers as long as the steamer was within range of their rifles.

"We encountered a tempest which broke our paddle-boxes in the Straits of Jubal, and reduced our speed to two miles an hour. The waves were frightful, and any who saw them on that day would have laughed at the old historian who says the Red Sea at Bab-el-Mandib was once closed by an iron chain; though he might not have scoffed at that more terrible tradition which avers, that when the wind is high and the waves are lashing on the Egyptian and the Arabian shores, the wild despairing cries of Pharaoh's drowning host are yet heard floating on the tumult of the storm.

"Off the desert isle of Jebel Zyghar we lost our rudder, and put into Mocha to refit. I went ashore with my master, who wished to see the town, but we found it in possession of a band of wild Arabs commanded by the Sheikh Ibrahim, who had seized and sacked it three days before. The bazaars were desolate and the streets empty,

for the people had all fled to the hills. The Bedouins fired on us, and we ran helter-skelter to reach our boats and regain the ship. Being somewhat behind the rest in gaining the beach, I was struck down by the butt-end of a matchlock, and taken prisoner, for my selfish master was in too great haste to take care of himself to think of a poor devil like me; so I was left in their hands a prisoner.

"I was sold in the market-place for eleven hundred piastres to Mahmoud Ali Badr, who made me a kettledrummer in his troop of guards, and having the good fortune to distinguish myself in that encounter with the Prince of Kaa-el-Bun, the revolted Vizier of Sana, when we gave him battle on the plains of Beitel Fakih, and fought hand to hand among the dhaura in the month of August, when the stalks were nine feet high, I was created a Nakib of Horse. In our next battle I slew the rebellious prince, and on laying his head at the sultan's feet, was made on the instant grand vizier, and here for some years I have led a life of luxury, splendour, and indolence, though not without anxiety, and not unchequered by regrets."

"And so you mean to end your days here?" said Langley, as Rabd-al-Hoosi concluded with a long and deep-drawn sigh.

"God forbid!" said he, fervently; "when I have amassed a sufficient sum in gold and jewels, I shall pack my kit, and departing in the night without beat of drum, bid a long adieu to turban and to harem, to the sultan and his viziership; and sincerely will I thank heaven, if, with my poor head safe on my shoulders, I am again on the blue waves of the sea that bear me to the land of liberty—far from this torrid clime of sands and coffee-hills, flowers and precious stones, splendour and barbarity; for deeply in my heart is the sentiment of that dear Scottish song, which says,

'Now if the lowly home be mine,
In which my fathers dwelt;
And I can worship at the shrine,
Where they in fervour knelt;
No glare of wealth, or honour high,
Shall lure me from thy strand;
Oh! may I yield my parting sigh,
In thee—my native land!'

The vizier ceased; his eyes grew sad and dull, and he gazed earnestly at us as if to read in our faces what we thought of his narrative. We expressed the pleasure his confidence had given us, and our belief that his resolution to quit the perilous position he held at Sana was both wise and honourable.

"By the bye," said I, "what was the name of the officer you accompanied from London, and who so cruelly left you to the mercy of the Bedouins?"

"Fetlock—Captain the Honourable Charles Fetlock."

"Of the 8th Dragoon Guards, formerly?"

"The same—did you know him?"

"I *have* met him," said I, with a sigh of anger at the name, while Fred, who knew the story, gave me a hasty glance, for the mention of Fetlock opened up a fountain of bitterness, mortification, and sorrow in my breast; for by his vanity and vindictive spirit I had first been separated from poor Cecil Marchmont.

The night was now far advanced, and though Rabd-al-Hoosi pressed us to remain, saying, with a kind smile, that it was only "the wee short hour ayont the twal," we retired, for my mind was now occupied by contemplating the ticklish and arduous—and, as Fred called it, "very peculiar" task I had to perform on the morrow—to make love for the potent and magnificent Imaum of Sana; and I lay for a full hour awake, arranging sets of phrases in my mind, and translating from memory odds and ends of sonnets from Hafiz and others.

CHAPTER L.

THE SILENT WOMAN.

IT was with the utmost reluctance and without feeling the slightest curiosity to see this celebrated slave, or caring one rush whether or not his Majesty the Imaum succeeded in gaining her esteem, that (after leaving Fred, of course, with Amina) I was conducted through the strong, massive, and polished brass gates which enclosed the rampart of the seraglio, and found myself traversing its intricate galleries and arched passages under the guidance of Osman Oglou, the chief of the black eunuchs, whose followers, clad in snow white robes and turbans, which contrasted strongly with their black shining features, appeared at every door and landing-place, armed with sabres; for this was what is figuratively named the Rose Garden of the Seraglio, where seven hundred of the finest fair and brown flowers the markets of Mocha, Mascat, and Medina could procure from Syria, Egypt, or elsewhere, awaited the smiles of his Terror, the sultan; but to the anger and mortification of the odd six hundred and ninety-nine, for the last three months, the said smiles and all the envied society of Solyman had been lavished on this silent slave, whose heart I was now about to essay in some language unknown, on behalf of her royal proprietor and lord.

Up to this moment I had not the most remote idea of what I should say, how I should address her, or the arguments to adduce; but rhymed over and over again a verse from the Persian.

"Oh thou, my soul's beloved! with thee
The dragon's dungeon would to me
But as a bower of roses, be
All paved and beautified with bliss;
Heart-plunderer! whom I love too well,
With thee I joyously could dwell,
Even in the howling halls of hell,
And from thy lips an Eden kiss!"

"This," thought I, "must melt the most obdurate Arab maid!" Yet I had a feeling of doubt as to the propriety, and an unpleasant conviction of the absurdity of the task which had been thrust upon me; but I remembered that we would soon be out of Sana; that the success of my mission depended upon my humouring the whims of this pampered despot, and that my anticipated—nay, my promised recommendation to the favour and protection of the Horse Guards, depended upon the success of that mission, and the accomplishment of a friendly league and alliance with Solyman.

The chief of the eunuchs drew back the silken screen of a doorway, and ushered me into a suite of apartments, at the extremity of which I perceived a female sitting on a pile of cushions. He pointed to her with one of those broad leering and half malevolent smiles which can only be seen on a negro's face, and saying "that he would wait at the end of the passage, as he wished to enjoy a chibouque," allowed the curtain half to close, and left me to follow my own devices.

The lightness, loftiness, and splendour of those apartments impressed me. They were rather a suite of pavilions than of rooms, having on one side hangings of green cloth, stamped with silver flowers; on the other three sides were windows, having gilded sashes filled with painted Venetian glass; these were open, and revealed the hot hazy landscape without, and lying far down below; while close by them the brilliant roses, the convolvuli, and many climbing plants gave a freshness and beauty to the place. The floors were laid with soft Persian carpets. In the centre of each pavilion played a fountain with golden fish in a basin of marble, while a silver lamp hung from its dome which was painted white and starred with gold. There were ten of these pavilions, all exactly alike, and the effect of the long perspective of these gilded and horseshoe arches, with those brilliant hangings which were festooned under them, the painted lights and the line of fountains, was beyond description beautiful.

The whole air was redolent of freshness and perfume, while the carpets were so soft that the tread of my slippered feet was quite unheard as I approached this secluded flower, whose pensive attitude, as she bowed her forehead on her hand, concealing all her face, impressed me as much as the snow-white beauty of her hand and arm and the grace of her figure as she reclined upon the soft and luxurious cushions, which, with folded carpets, were the staple articles of furniture in those apartments.

In doubt what to say, I gazed upon her with growing interest, and forgot my poetry, for the sad conviction forced itself upon me that she was—alas!—an European, and after the small Arab women to whom I had been lately accustomed, her reclining figure looked large, full-limbed, and round.

Her dress was gorgeously rich; a low cut vest of pale blue velvet, cowered with silver, and having pearl buttons; it fitted exactly, and

showed the surpassing beauty of her bosom, neck, and shoulders though these were all shrouded by a chemisette of the finest muslin her drawers (or wide trousers, rather) were of the whitest silk, and her slippers were of satin, embroidered with precious stones. Her beautiful arms, of that full round form and snowy whiteness which never come with Eastern blood, were adorned by bracelets of emeralds, among which diamonds were sparkling. On her head was a small gauze turban, the end of which, like the braids of her long hair, hung over her back, and at the end of each braid hung a pearl pendant.

All at once an emotion like a deadly palsy seemed to pass over my heart, as some memories of that sad, silent, and recumbent figure flashed upon me!

"Cecil!" I exclaimed, in a husky voice of mingled joy and fear.

She looked up, and never till my dying day shall I forget that startled look of joy, of sorrow and dismay.

My readers will imagine that I am making a romantic story for them, but alas! it is nothing of the kind; all was then sad, stern, and cruel reality.

Rejoiced as I was to find her living, at first I forgot the situation and the circumstances under which we met, and that the impatient and perhaps inquisitive chief of the eunuchs was almost within ear-shot; and I wept like a child as I went down on my knees beside her, took both her dear, small hands in mine, and gazed fondly on the sweet sad eyes I had long thought should never more beam on me. She threw herself into my arms; twenty times I kissed her, and twenty times I held her at arms' length to contemplate her well-remembered face—the face that for so many long years had haunted me in dreams by night and reveries by day; and then came the crushing remembrance of what she was—a prisoner; and far beyond the reach of rescue or release!

She was still, indeed, my own Cecil, but not half so beautiful as she had been, though the dazzling whiteness of her skin made her seem divine to the old rake Solyman. It was long before she became tolerably composed, and briefly but incoherently told me her eventful story.

Driven by adverse winds into the Arabian Gulf, the Farnham Castle—the Indiaman in which she was a passenger—had foundered on that dangerous rock, which has since been so well known, and which lies twelve miles north of the Isle of Abdulcuria. The crew and passengers escaped in three boats. Dreading the barbarity of the Socotora Islanders, and having secured compasses, blankets, and provisions, they bore away for our settlement at Aden, four hundred miles distant. Two boats perished in a storm. Cecil in the third—the only lady with twenty rough seamen—after enduring incredible misery by the heat of the sun at noon, the chill dews of night, scarcity of food, water, and raiment—reached the Arabian coast at Cape Hargiah, sixty miles eastward of the British garrison. There

every one of the poor fellows who had saved and protected her, as if she had been their own sister, were murdered by a party of wandering Abdali and Bedouins under Sheikh Ibrahim. They seized and sold her to the Sultan of Sana, who had detained her for three months, during which, though surrounded by every luxury and magnificence, she had been wretched and miserable, suffering what is beyond the power of language to describe, in her terror and abhorrence of her amorous lord and her longing for liberty or death.

Thus it was that my dear, sensible, and loveable Cecil became transformed into a silent odalisque.

Her voice, which had been heard so seldom, that Solyman concluded she was dumb, or nearly so, was "low and sweet" as ever; but the brightness of her smile had fled, and sadness—the most intense sadness, alone remained. She made no reproachful inquiry about Blanche Palmer, but said to me, endearingly,—

"And you have risked your life to free me! You heard I was here, and came to rescue your poor Cecil from this life of unspeakable horror?"

I had now to undeceive her, and relate the mission on which I had been sent, the distance and the dangers that lay between us and our only friends, the brave fellows of "the Queen's Own;" the miraculous chance which had brought me to her presence in those sacred and secluded apartments which no believer, and still less an infidel, ever trod, and concluded by stating that the success of my embassy, the safety of my life, and the life of my friend, depended, perhaps, on my obtaining her love and esteem for the tyrant of Yemen!

I soon regretted that I was so candid as to set all this before her, for it produced a wild hysterical fit of weeping, and embittered her hitherto calm despair.

The jarring of rings upon a brass rod, as the chief of the eunuchs, whose patience an hour and half must have well nigh exhausted—and yet that hour and half were like ten minutes to me—startled us, and made me spring from Cecil's side in terror lest I had been discovered, and it would have doomed me to death to have been seen touching her; and with my life all hopes of freedom would terminate for her.

Between the parted curtains I could see the black, and as I at that time felt, infernal visage of this watchful guardian of the seraglio, with his shining eyes, his snow-white teeth and turban, peering at us. I waved my hand, so much as to say, "I will soon be with you," and he withdrew to resume his pipe.

Wild with grief, Cecil implored me not to leave her, or to take her with me, and then wrung her hands and buried her face in the cushions without listening to my answer, for she knew that it was both impossible that I could remain or that she could go. The desperate circumstances in which we were placed imparted a calmness to my manner, voice, and air which I was far from feeling, for I knew how

necessary it was to act a part, in case the eyes of that Nubian dog whom I would gladly have pistoled, were upon us from some quiet nook. Indeed, I could not be certain whether the eyes of the *Imaum Solyman* were not watching us from some secret eylet-hole; I had heard of such things.

"You will save me now, my own beloved Frank! You will take me with you, will you not?" said Cecil, in a voice of sorrowful confidence.

"I will, Cecil—I will, or die here with you! You shall go with me to Aden, or I will never leave Sana alive. Oh, Cecil," I continued, with my eyes full of tears, "it was God's blessed goodness that sent me here to comfort and to save you."

"But, oh, Frank, be prudent—be wary, for a thousand dangers environ us among these detestable Arabs."

"Dearest Cecil, I am old enough now to be prudent—to go warily. If I had only a hundred men of 'the Queen's Own,' here—"

"How like a dream it is to hear your voice again. For some time past I have been dreading that madness was coming upon me."

"Ah, calm yourself and collect all your energies, for be assured, Cecil, you will need them. I must leave you now—"

There was a wild and imploring expression in her dark blue eyes, and I could perceive the veins of her forehead throbbing with emotion.

"Measures will be concerted for your escape—take courage, for I have friends with me, here in Sana. Alas! dear Cecil, when we used to sit by the banks of the *Aikenburn*, with our young heads nestled in the same plaid, and read '*Le Diable Boiteux*,' could we have imagined that a day would come when you would be situated like *Theodora*, and I like the poor *Toledan*—the captive of *Algiers* whom we pitied so much."

Cecil's tears fell faster. We had never, as yet, said one word of other days, or how we loved each other still, for the time and place were both unsuited for tender protestations or endearing memories.

"My heart—my poor heart," said Cecil; "I never thought it could beat so fast as it does now."

Again the rings ran sharply on the brass rod, as the curtain was withdrawn, and the chief of the eunuchs appeared. Aware of the imperative necessity for retiring, I hurriedly said all I could think of to reassure her, and advised her, as the best way of deceiving the sultan, to afford him some hope of her favour, and that on my second visit (if another was permitted) I would have a plan arranged for her escape.

"Heaven give me strength, courage, and patience to await your return, and receive what fate has in store for us!" said she, stretching her arms endearingly and imploringly towards me, as I hastened through the long suite of gorgeous pavilions, looking back with the

eye of one who looks his last on some beloved object, and without having the least conception of the course to be adopted.

Osman Oglou, the chief eunuch, scrutinized me keenly, and somewhat insolently, as I rejoined him, for the minds of these officials are only actuated by one sentiment—malevolence; they become beings destitute of human feeling, and act alone under that despotic influence which destroys every principle of the heart and soul.

I paid little attention to his remarks, and none whatever to the grins of his capacious mouth, as we passed through the seraglio, for I was carefully examining every nook, passage, and door, and their intricacy and security extinguished every spark of hope in my heart, and it sank into despondency when I heard the clank of the heavy brazen gate, which was closed behind us by the half-nude but well-armed Yemenees of the infantry guard, and the followers of the Chief Strangler.

CHAPTER LI.

THE HALL OF THE BANNERS.

LANGLEY was the first person I inquired for on leaving the seraglio, for I was trembling with impatience to relate my discovery, to rehearse the interview, and to obtain his advice; but he was absent with Amina, who was veiled and mounted on a dromedary, and accompanied by Mahmoud Ali Badr, to enjoy a ride round Hesn-al-Mouhabib. I had just drained a large cup of cool wine to give me courage and enable me to arrange the thoughts that whirled within me, when the venerable katib of Rabd-al-Hoosi made his appearance (after knocking deferentially at my door, in accordance with the strict injunctions of the Prophet), to say that the “Leader of the Faithful awaited me in the Hall of the Banners,” and there I was constrained at once to accompany him, for the tempers of such personages do not brook much trifling.

This hall was ornamented by many mirrors in gilded frames, and between each drooped a banner of brilliant silk covered with rich embroidery, and having massive fringes and tassels, while the poles were cased in ornaments of gold and silver. Above them hung a row of projecting crystal branches, holding green and white wax tapers, and from each of these depended festoons of freshly gathered flowers. The pillars were of that fresh-coloured granite, which, strange as it may seem, is to be found nowhere out of Arabia, save in the northern parish of Fordyce in Scotland. When lighted at night, the effect of this hall must have been very imposing. At the upper end was an open horseshoe arch, the casements of which stood wide open, revealing the beautiful garden of the seraglio, with its fountains and flowers, its myrtle and orange-trees, its shaded

seats and pretty kiosks, each of which was covered by a luxuriant mass of roses blooming in the radiance of the bright Arabian sun.

On a pile of cushions which were placed in the centre of a gorgeous carpet, Solymán sat alone in this superb apartment, or, at least, attended by a single slave. In his left hand he held the amber mouthpiece of his long hookah, which he smoked through a crystal globe full of rose-water. A little and almost nude Abyssinian girl, black as night, but with soft and pretty features, remained on her knees at the edge of the carpet, to attend to this prodigious pipe.

Between his voluminous white turban, which was pressed down over his eyebrows, and his still whiter beard which grew up to his cheekbones, but little of Solymán's features were visible. He did not hear me approach, as he had subsided into one of those meditative fits of indolence and abstraction which are habitual to natives of the East, and mechanically he seemed to inhale the smoke from the long gilded coil, and then allowed it to ascend in spiral and fragrant columns into the domed roof of the saloon, where it played in wreaths among the festooned flowers and shining banners.

Without one thought in my head, save of Cecil's danger and the fears which agitated her, I stood, as one in a dream, by the golden edge of this tyrant's carpet, which was one of the most brilliant efforts of the weaving Guebres, and nearly a minute elapsed before I caught his deep-set glittering eyes, which were almost hidden by the shaggy brows that overhung them like two short white icicles.

"Wallah-el-nebi!" said he, "is it thee? Thou art welcome to me, O Kafir, as dew to a flower at noon."

I bowed with a humility which my heart was far from feeling.

"Thou hast seen this silent slave?"

"Imaum," I replied, cautiously; "I beheld but her eyes."

"Of course; it is not meet that more should be seen of those who find favour in the sight of a believer—of a sultan. Well, Kafir! is she not a glorious substitute for those celestial brides, the black-eyed girls of Paradise, awaiting me above? They whose coral lips will give sweet kisses perfumed by the odour of immortality! Didst thou tell her that, if I wished it, she should be *there* with me to share one of those wondrous couches which are hollowed from a single pearl?"

"I told her all that the Leader of the Faithful commanded me."

"Thou didst well. And what did she say at the mention of Khoroo of Persia, and the beautiful Shireen?"

"She wept."

"Ah, her heart was touched, no doubt! Didst thou tell her that the Koran says we may have with us in heaven those wives we love well on earth?"

I muttered some absurd reply—I know not what.

"Did she speak?"

"Yes; repeatedly," said I, with a sigh of anger.

"She spoke!" exclaimed Solyman, fire and joy flashing together in his basilisk eyes, as he tossed away his pipe, and half-raised himself by placing his hands on the cushions. "Daily, for three months, I have condescended to address to her the most endearing terms, and have made her such offers as never were made to a woman since Kadijah died, but never have I heard the sound of her voice in reply. Slave, thou hast done well! I swear to thee by the fig and the olive, thy reward will indeed be beyond thy poor conception magnificent!"

"May the shadow of your favour increase!" mumbled the katib, for my heart was too full of anger to reply.

A passage in the Koran makes this oath, "by the fig," &c., peculiarly sacred, and the imaum never used it save when highly excited; but my hatred for him was now becoming insupportable.

"Didst thou speak to her of marriage?"

"When I did so, she wept bitterly."

"Tears—tears—always tears; she will weary me, like that woman of Aleppo, whom Osman strangled. The condescension and splendour of my offers should surely appease the useless regrets of this mere infidel woman."

"Great prince," said I, sadly, "we cannot presume to measure the depth of another's sorrow."

"True. Yet it is strange that her presence here, which is the source of joy to me, should occasion so much grief in her. O happy thou, who hast heard the sound of her voice! What was her language, and what her answer?"

"Her language is a barbarous dialect of Frangistan; her answer expressed a doubt that your love was rather the force of habit than an actual passion, as your majesty was old enough to be the father of her father."

I repented deeply having said this, for it was my own thought, and not poor Cecil's remark. The imaum crushed the amber mouth of his hookah, and cried, in accents of rage,—

"May our holy Prophet—whose name be exalted—curse thee! Darest thou liken me to one dog who begot another? If these were the words of this Kafir woman, were she beautiful as a houri, I shall have her tied in a bag, and flung—wallah—like a blind puppy into the Shab!"

"Leader of the Faithful (*i.e.*, imaum), hear me to the end. This woman is a Moslem."

"A Moslem and I have never discovered it!" cried Solyman, whose sudden anger gave place to surprise, while I blushed as I stumbled from one falsehood to another. "Well, and what then?"

"Thus she doubts that you can espouse her, having the full number of wives already."

"The devil, who begot all the Faringis, has put some very troublesome scruples into this slave's head," said Solyman; "God is merci-

'all to us, for men are weak. By the fourth chapter of the *Koran*, we are permitted to wed *all* women, even those already married, *'if our right hand possess them as slaves,'* and thus do I possess my hitherto silent one. But, by that most convenient and flexible chapter, it is also permitted to true believers to change one wife for another, by a legal divorce; thus, assure her that I have sworn by the Prophet's beard, and by the golden spout of the Kaaba, to put away my fourth wife, an Egyptian, named Zenobia Soupki, for I am wearied of her having only daughters, and that I shall bestow her upon my faithful Rabd-al-Hoosi, or *thee*, perhaps, O Kafir, for the glorious service thou hast done me."

I have often smiled since at this offer; but *then* nothing was further from my thoughts than merriment. I would have given a good round sum for liberty to punch the old tyrant's head, or to have given his voluminous beard a wrench, in token of the contempt I felt.

"Assure her that Zenobia, the Egyptian, shall be put away—would that I had the language of Frangistan, to tell her so myself!—and that I will take her—yea, she alone—to my bosom for ever! Tell her she must not delay much longer, as our vizier says that the people of Sana are daring to murmur one to another at my long seclusion here in Hesn-al-Mouhabib; but they should remember the words of the Prophet—*O, true believers, verily of your wives and your children you have an enemy!* for they distract men from their duty; thus, in contemplating the white skin and soft tresses of the silent one, I have forgotten my people, and omitted no less than three holy feasts!"

"Imaum," I replied, "I have but the use of one tongue, and cannot hope to succeed where you have failed."

"Wallah, what dost thou mean now, Kafir?" he asked, while lowering his shaggy eyebrows.

"That though I may convince her of the poor Egyptian being put away, I cannot teach her to love you."

"Wretched dog! thou darest again to express these miserable doubts, and after raising the hopes of Solymán of Sana, to dash the cup of joy from his lips!" He said this hoarsely, for all unused to have a wish thwarted, the querulous old man was again choking with rage. "I know not what prevents me from ordering thee the bowstring at once, save that thy tongue may yet serve me, before it is torn out by Baba Booli. That tongue can reach the ear of this Frankish slave, and, through her ear, her heart; thus, if thou dost not teach her to love me, before this moon is out—now three days—by the ninety-nine names of God, I swear thou shalt repent it sorely!"

"I came hither under the protection and by order of my commanding officer," said I, making a terrible effort to suppress my rising passion. "I hold a commission in the service of——"

"Thou shalt be blown from the mouth of a mortar!" thundered Solymán, in an ecstasy of wrath.

At that moment violent hands were laid upon me. I was half-dragged, half-led away, and found that the friendly vizier had just come in time to prevent some irreparable catastrophe; and he hurried me to the apartments allotted to Langley and myself

CHAPTER LII.

A COUNCIL—BUT NOT—OF WAR.

‘AN unmitigated old bear!’ were my first words on entering the room, and dashing my tarboosh to the other end of it, in ungovernable rage.

‘Hallo!’ exclaimed Fred, who was stretched on a sofa, in his trowsers and vest; ‘what the deuce is the matter now?’

‘Matter!’ I reiterated; ‘my brain will turn, I believe. Heaven direct me!’ I added, throwing myself on a sofa opposite.

‘Hilton, my dear fellow, you are ill,’ said Fred, springing to his feet.

‘I’ll—no—do you think I look so?’

‘Yes, pale as death, upon my honour!—like a timid fellow who has just escaped from hanging, or a runaway horse. But I have some of our Scotch vizier’s brandy here—where is my riding flask? Oh, here; take a nip, it will put you all right.’

A glass of Radd-al-Hoosi’s *eau de vie* was produced, and the moment that august personage left us, I related my startling discovery of Cecil, and my subsequent interview with the passionate imam.

‘Poor girl!’ said Fred, commiseratingly; ‘and you, my poor fellow, no wonder it is you were pale and excited. Take another sip. What a fortunate—what a glorious discovery!’

‘Fortunate—glorious—Fred?’

‘Of course; is it not most fortunate that you learned, and by the most slender chance in the world, that she is here?’

‘It is likely to drive me mad!’

‘Joy never made any one mad, I believe,’ said the matter-of-fact Fred, mistaking my meaning. ‘You imagined she was drowned when we picked up the head-rail of the Farnham Castle. Now, has not fate willed it better? While there is life, we have hope, and we shall soon set her free; and then how we shall laugh over Lady Montessor’s evening parties and routes—Letty Howard, Blanche Palmer, and Jack of the Buffs—the dowager, his mother—our picnics, sham-fights, and regattas—we’ll have them all canvassed again. A new European face! it will be quite refreshing. And to think of that sad and thoughtful governess, about whom I quizzed you at Gillingham—your first love and old flame—being here at the back of the habitable world, and turning the head of that venerable—venerable—’

"Beast," I suggested.

"Solyman, cousin of the sun, moon, and stars, as that sly fellow his vizier would say. In this matter *he* may be of great service to us."

Fred's easy and lively manner somewhat reassured me.

"As for the vizier, I would rather not confide my secret or our intentions to him, for two good reasons," said I. "Firstly, though a countryman, he seems to be too subservient to Solyman; and, secondly, even were he disposed to assist us with heart and hand, I would be loth to compromise the poor man with such a devil of a fellow as the imaum, his master."

"He seems full of candour and friendship—"

"When he has a bottle of brandy under his belt; but since his story was told, you may perceive he has been very reserved."

"Very," said Fred; "I am surprised that he has not invited us to see his wives."

"He is too eastern now to think of such a thing."

"Perhaps he thinks they wont bear a close inspection under British eyes; but let us arrange our thoughts, and put on our considering caps, to devise a mode of freeing Miss Marchmont forthwith."

"Before this moon has waned, I am to win her love for Solyman, or lose my life."

"Did the miserable old wretch say so?"

"He swore it, by a solemn oath."

"Then within three days she must be free, or all is over."

"Oh, Fred!" said I, after a pause, "when I saw the figure of Cecil before me, as I approached her through the long suite of pavilions, I immediately recognised the veiled figure which the dancer, Haura, showed me in the well, on that night we spent among the Bedouins; and thus her prediction, that the vision was of she I was to love, has come fearfully true."

"But, if so, what are we to make of *the two men chained together, and one dead?*" asked Fred, with a grave expression on his handsome face. "What do you think of *that?*"

"Don't mention it, pray," said I, with an involuntary shrug of my shoulders. "My dear, dear Cecil!" I exclaimed, with sudden grief; "it appears too like some horrible dream to realize, that she, the queen of my boyish heart, and of that bright fairyland it pictured, when at home among the braes and glens of Aikendean, should have passed through such sufferings and perils, and be now surrounded by so many dangers in this remote and barbarous country."

Langley was moved by my emotion, and patting me kindly on the shoulder, said,

"Take courage, Frank, and another nip of the brandy, too: 'A good time is coming,' as the song says."

"All O'Hara's wishes and warnings to avoid quarrels and disputes with the people are fresh in my recollection; and I am assured that

any attempt to free Miss Marchmont, even if successful, will cause us to lose our commissions, if not our lives, for an endless war with our garrison at Aden is sure to follow."

"And what the deuce will it signify to us?" said Fred, quietly lighting his chibouque. "If old O'Hara were here, he is the very man who would enter into our plot, with heart and soul, if the safety of all British India were perilled by the attempt, instead of a wretched rock, which seems intended for nothing that I know of, but to give coals and cholera to the passing steamers; and, I verily believe, there is not a soldier in the 'Queen's Own' who would not be ready to fight to the last gasp to free a countrywoman, or any woman, from sorrow, disgrace, and captivity; and, more than all, the daughter of a brave old officer, who fought like a hero in India. I wish we had a couple of companies here, my own and O'Flannigan's, we would soon beat in that brass seraglio gate, and make quick work of it, with old Bluebeard and his—what-do-ye-call-'ems—eunuchs; ay, and Ali Badrs blackamoor guards to boot."

"One thing is evident, that from this time forward we must give up all hope of concluding the treaty which was the object of our perilous mission."

"The treaty be—hanged! We must now bend all our energies to getting Cecil—see how your phraseology infects me—Miss Marchmont out of the hands of these Philistines, and then quit this Castle of the Graces without beat of drum."

"Fortunately, the nights are dark, for the rainy season is approaching, and there is little moon visible. All we require to secure our flight will be three stout horses; or, what say you to dromedaries? they are quite as fleet and more enduring."

"I do not think so. But *three*, you say? How about Amina?"

"Ah, I had quite forgotten her."

"I thought so," said Fred, pettishly; "but her retreat must be cared for too."

"Of course. I would not leave that poor little girl behind us, either. Oh, if we could but communicate with her brother, Mohamed, or were within sight of the red rocks of Jebel Ahmer!"

"With our horses sinking and Solyman's rapsallions close upon us," said Fred. "Well, when one is wishing, it would cost nothing more to wish oneself within Jebel Ahmer, or better still, beyond the Turkish wall at Aden."

"A month ago, could we have believed a time would come when we would wish ourselves safe among the Abdali?"

"Have you reconnoitred the seraglio wall, or thought of how we are to proceed?"

"I have revolved twenty modes in my mind, and have come to the resolution that there is but one way of getting Cecil out—by escalade."

"Impossible!"

"Walls, gates, guards, eunuchs, and the devil knows what more,

secure the seraglio on this side; on the other, we have the rocks and wall only to surmount. But some *ruse* must be adopted to draw the attention of the matchlockmen from that quarter, or we shall be discovered, as their rounds are incessant."

"Let us set this end of the mansion on fire; *that* will attract their attention, surely."

"The imaum will be so enraged for the loss of his slave, that the destruction of his beautiful castle will not make a straw of difference to us, if we are overtaken and made prisoners, which God forbid!" said I, shuddering at the contemplation of Cecil's probable fate under these circumstances.

"Come, we shall make a reconnoissance of the walls from the outside, and find what is necessary to be done. 'Pon my honour," added Fred, with a half smile, as he placed his tarboosh jauntily on one side of his head, "I like this sort of thing immensely! When I used to read of such adventures, I longed to be the hero of one, and here we are among them, up to the eyes. I must furbish up my engineering, for when at Sandhurst I was taught

—— 'The art of fortification, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress or a nunnery.'

Seraglios were not taken into consideration; but generally, one wall is pretty much like another."

The guard of matchlockmen at the strong gates of the castle turned out, after their own uncouth fashion, and gave us an unwilling salute, while a bunch of bells were jangled on a pole and a gong was beaten.

Evening was closing; the dew lay deep on grass and flower, the shadows of every rock and solemn palm-tree were thrown far to the eastward, and the amber-coloured clouds were floating amid a sea of brilliance in the west; the stars were beginning to twinkle like little diamonds, and the waning moon's pale crescent was glimmering afar off, and low in the sky, at the distant end of the long, flat vale, which is overlooked by the carved and turreted ramparts of Hesn-al-Mouhabib.

"At such a time as this," said I, passing my arm through Langley's, "I remember, with sincere remorse, my temporary regard for Blanche Palmer."

"Pshaw! a mere flirtation *en passant*—no one remembers such things now-a-days."

"It was more, I fear."

"A combination of circumstances made it seem so; but what then? You deserve immense credit for your steady attachment to Miss Marchmont."

"My poor Cecil!" said I, gazing sadly at the rocks and ramparts, the projections of which were bathed in amber light or sunk in purple shadow, as they towered above us

"How old were you when you joined the Queen's as a volunteer in India?"

"Not very old, Fred—a mere boy."

"My dear fellow, your constancy is miraculous! When I was eighteen, one love chased another away, just as shadow follows shadow across a corn-field. Moreover, unfortunately, I was always in love with girls who were older than myself, or worse still, with new married brides. When I was only a lad of fifteen, I remember how sorrowful and savage I felt when my beautiful cousin, Anna Jer-ningham, married young Montessor, of the Irish Hussars—you know, the 8th—yet neither my sorrow nor my anger prevented me from enjoying a large piece of bridecake, or from assisting to set off the fireworks in the lawn, and feeling immensely gratified by a fine gold-headed riding-whip, which I received from Anna's lover on the marriage morning."

Honest, good-hearted Fred Langley! He saw that I was feverish and miserable, and rattled on in this fashion to keep up my spirit. After a long pause—

"It is very singular," he added, "but I never knew any man who was married to the girl with whom he first fell in love; besides, I don't believe in first loves."

"A bad augury for me," said I; "but you are a gay Englishman, Fred, and forget that, with the graver Scot, the first love of his heart is closely interwoven with his inborn love of country; one is often but a portion of the other. You might have remarked this in the story of the vizier. His love-interviews were always accompanied by a lively remembrance of the place and scene. But oh, Fred Langley, the adventures of to-day resemble witchcraft—a dream—a delusion—something that I cannot realize! It seems too incredible to believe that Cecil is up there—enclosed—caged—confined in that embattled mansion; yet her voice is still in my ears—so plaintive and so sad!"

"Poor girl—she must have endured much!"

"Since her father's death—oh yes—in many, many ways. The proud old Indian colonel doated on her! Like yourself, Fred, I have flirted, danced, hunted, and driven with the belles of fifty garrison towns, and know them all from Calcutta to Canterbury," I continued, while the present fled and the past returned upon me. "I have sent books and bouquets, music, verses, and Heaven only knows what more, to girls like Blanche Palmer, and quarrelled with lively little elves like her cousin Letty—quarrelled to kiss and become friends again; I have had all the excitement of embarking for foreign service, the sulking and discomfort of crowded transports; the landing again, and hubbub of marching through bustling streets; ordered here, and fighting there. I have seen the horrors of the retreat from Cabul, and the blood and slaughter of its flaming Balahissar; but like my own shadow, the face and form of more peaceful and happier

times were ever with me; amid all the gaiety or uproar of such scenes as these, in the solitude of the lonely outpost, the dark guard-room, and the silent tent, the buzz of the lively barrack and the happiness of the splendid mess, I remembered the soft, kind eyes of Cecil, and the accents of her dear, seductive voice. They were with me in many a torturing dream, in many a voiceless reverie! And this day she was before me, in my arms, and my kiss was on her cheek—Cecil! Cecil! but where? In the seraglio of a king of Yemen! Is it credible?"

My voice became tremulous; Fred blew his nose, curled up his moustachios, and walked very fast round the base of the rocks on which the castle stood, until we were under the seraglio, which overlooked a thick grove of giant citrons, the smallest of which were at least ten feet high. These beautiful evergreens are always thickly covered with leaves, and in the spring with clusters of rich flowers, while the fruit they yield is sometimes fourteen pounds in weight.

To Fred I indicated the line of triple-faced windows which lighted the suite of pavilions adjoining the apartment of Cecil. They were at the summit of a high wall, and on the tower at each corner, about two hundred feet apart, we saw the turbans of the sentinels, who at that moment were no doubt on their knees at prayer, as the sun had just begun to dip behind the distant hills.

"I could climb these rocks with ease," said I, "even were they ten times their present height. Many a time, at home, I have gambered about St. Abb's head, and other rocks that hang over the clerman Sea, shooting sea-mews and harrying the nests of the Solan geese, clinging to their iron fronts, with the wild birds screaming above and the waves dashing below, and there, with the sling of my gun in my teeth and a game-bag on my back, I have clung like a spider to a wall; and with such a prize before me, shall I, a mountaineer, shrink from such a molehill as these Arab rocks!"

"But the wall—think of it," said Fred.

"Ah, mercy me! that, indeed, seems inaccessible. It is at least fifty feet high, and the windows of the ten pavilions are on its summit."

"One thing is evident; there are no human means to reach these pavilions from without. Thus, it must be from *within*, and, by a rope fastened to the wall, her escape is made."

"A rope! Where shall we find such a thing?"

"There is a strong one in the well near the gate; we must secure it, and trust to some pretence connected with the sultan's love-making to have all arranged with Miss Marchmont; but for Heaven's sake, or rather your own, go surely and warily to work."

"But there are the sentinels."

"A new difficulty. We must fire the eastern wing of the castle about dusk to-morrow evening, and take advantage of the consequent confusion to achieve an escape. It is a desperate act, but we are desperate men, and have no other resource. The consecrated

standard of the Imaum Khassim, the founder of the kingdom of Yemen; the shirt of Mahomet; the veil of Ayesha, and her hair-rush, with other reliques and rubbish, are preserved in that eastern wing, and all the inmates will rush to secure their preservation; if not, and the sentinels should remain and handle their matchlocks, we must then trust to Providence and their bad firing. I'll bet a hundred to one they will never hit us. We can have our horses concealed at the tomb of Khassim, down in the valley, where there is a pretty grove and well, at which I watered my horse yesterday. But how we are to get four horses conveyed out of the fort and concealed there, without exciting suspicion, is at present beyond my comprehension."

Communing and planning thus, we slowly reascended to the fortress, and desperate though the attempt we were about to make might be, our ardour was in no way damped by the aspect of the several ghastly and mutilated remains of poor men who had been impaled alive, or hung on iron hooks by the wayside, and around whose naked and half-skeleton figures the ravenous vultures flitted and the jackals prowled.

We slept little that night, and dawn was stealing through the painted windows of our apartments before we separated, having finished Rabd-al-Hoosi's brandy, while considering and reconsidering our daring plans in every possible way, before we came to the conclusion that they were unalterable, and that no human ingenuity could make them better.

They were simply these;—

To create a confusion by firing the east wing of the castle.

To secure and conceal two horses of Mohamed Ali Badr's guards, in addition to our own.

To release Cecil from the seraglio by stratagem, and fly on the spur for Aden.

How we put these plans into operation, succeeding chapters will show; but considering the distance between our garrison and Hesn-al-Mouhabib, the time, the people, and the circumstances, nothing could be bolder or more rash and hazardous than the whole undertaking.

We took advantage of the darkness of the night to appropriate the rope of a deep draw-well which lies (or lay) near the castle gate, and Fred brought it to our apartment, concealed in his ample Arab pantaloons. I borrowed, in the same fashion, three pieces of port-fire from the field pieces which stood in front of the same gate, together with the slow match of a lintstock. From the iron portion of the latter I manufactured a species of hook, and firmly bound to it the end of the well-rope. After carefully examining every part, we found it, fortunately, sound and new, for not a strand was frayed or started.

We passed some hours of that evening with Amina, and, perceiving that I was sad, abstracted, and fretful, she kindly did all in her

power to amuse me, by telling little eastern legends, by singing monotonous Arab melodies to the tinkling of her lute, and by the prettiest prattle that ever fell from a little cherub mouth; but all this sweet girl's efforts were in vain. Cecil's safety alone could remove my anxiety!

After excusing ourselves from visiting Radd-al-Hoosi, who sent us an invitation, we retired to rest.

I strove, but fruitlessly, to sleep, that I might be fresh in all my energies for the undertaking of to-morrow; but my head ached with my endeavours to probe the future. On the agony of my anxiety, the feverishness of my hope, to say nothing of the anticipation of arrest, reprimands, and perhaps a court-martial for the terrible catastrophe of the coming day—a catastrophe which might, however, prove most fatal to us all—I need not expatiate.

But the shades of night rolled away into eternity, and the bright morrow came with its blue skies and beaming sun, and I started from a couch on which I had barely closed an eye, to examine once more the rope and hook, on which *my* world depended.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE TOMB OF KHAASSIM.

"IN this undertaking, I have but one regret," said I, on sitting down to breakfast of coffee, eggs, hulwah, bread, and wine.

"And this regret?" asked Fred.

"Is your commission, Langley—for it may be lost to you, even if you escape with a whole skin."

"I beg to differ from you, Hilton, as I do not conceive that by any clause of the Articles of War, or the Regulations either, our commissions are compromised, for we are only doing our duty in freeing a British subject from an unwarrantable state of captivity."

"I wonder that I can think of such trifles when so much is at stake; but this necessary stratagem of setting fire to the palace—"

"It can never be known to be *our* work,* and we need not criminate ourselves. But what the deuce do I care about a court-martial, supposing O'Hara was so absurd as to conceive one necessary? I have £6000 a year—an estate in Essex, and expectations ('every one *has* expectations, you know,' as Letty Howard's mother used to say), and I would freely risk them all, as well as my Lieutenancy, in this young lady's cause."

"God bless you, my dear Langley!" said I, with ardour; "I have only my commission and my life, and freely would I peril both a thousand times for the safety of poor Cecil!"

"As for a court-martial," continued Fred, who breakfasted as if he

* Subsequent events rendered our concealing this fact unnecessary.—F. H.

had come in from a fox-hunt, "I heartily wish we were within a mile of anything half so civilized. Only think of being under the same roof with a rascally old imaum, who, though he may be, as his Scotch vizier terms him, 'the cornerstone of the earth, and acme of wisdom,' forced the envoy of the sultan of Lahadj to eat *his own ears*!—a prince whose greatest emirs and sheikhs deem it an honour to be called his most humble servants and slaves. 'Pon my word, I should like to see the old Bluebeard well trounced in a horse-pond. Oh, don't be alarmed," continued Fred, on perceiving that I glanced uneasily at the two Abyssinian slaves who attended us, "you forget that these poor devils can only speak their own language, which sounds, for all the world, like a monkey cracking nuts. But, thank Heaven, we shall soon be with the 'Queen's Own' again, and out of this red-hot region, where people shave their heads instead of their chins, prefer fingers to forks, and think it a greater honour to be strangled than shot."

Amina gazed at us from time to time with an anxious expression in her quick, dark eyes, for her natural acuteness enabled her to perceive that something unusual was on the tapis; but notwithstanding her winning smiles and piquant little ways, Fred, though repeatedly asked what we were about to do, did not satisfy her, lest some unwary exclamation or reply might reveal our intentions and frustrate them all.

"You have often wished to visit the tomb of the Imaum Khassim," said he, taking her hands in his, as he awoke her from her forenoon siesta.

"To pray to Fatima for my dear brother, Mohamed — oh, yes," replied Amina, whose eyes swam with delight; "and when will you take me there?"

"To-day—"

"Just now," said she, throwing a veil over her head.

"When the heat of noon has passed, Amina. Do you long so much to be with Mohamed again?"

"Can you ask me?" she said, lifting up her eyes and her arms, which, though not quite so fair as those of a European beauty, were of the most perfect form; "Oh, Allah only knows how much! Mohamed loves his little sister with a mother's love, and yet he has the heart of a lion. He thinks often of poor, lost Amina—but I hope he does not weep for her. And shall she see him soon?"

"Yes, dearest—very soon."

"And you will tell him how much you love me," said Amina, lowering her voice and eyes.

"I will tell him, my little innocent one (a perilous task, perhaps!) how passionately I adore you, if, indeed, I have words enough to express how much," said Fred, whose voice trembled with tenderness; for he had now got over his qualms, and those absurd but innate English prejudices of race, and had given himself up to all the temptation of loving this desert flower.

After this, Amina was long silent, and sat among her cushions with her eyes cast down, and her thick black hair clustering over her brow as she leant it on her small and finely tapered hand. She remained long thus in happy reverie, during which her busy little head was thinking of Mohamed, and what he would say of her love for Langley—a *Faringi*—and of Langley's love for her; and bright smiles played about her red lips and soft features, as she filled up the shining future; but what that future was, kind Heaven and her own ardent heart alone knew. I could read the tenor of the young girl's thoughts, and envied the smiles of tranquil happiness that spread, from time to time, over her sunny face, as she played with her large fan, and between its bright feathers stole glances at Fred, who had also given himself up to reverie, and was studying a pocket map of Yemen which Major Dreghorn, of the Artillery, had given me on leaving Aden.

Noon passed slowly, hotly, and heavily on.

The chief of the eunuchs presented himself, with his snow-white garments, black, shining visage, glittering eyes, and gold earrings, to ask if I was in readiness to visit the Frankish slave in obedience to the sultan's behest. Wishing that this visit, on which the fate of Cecil's life as well as mine must hinge, should be delayed at least until the evening, I begged to be excused for some time, assuring Osman Oglou that I felt indisposed, and would be unable to fulfil the sultan's orders until near sunset, when the atmosphere would be more cool, at which time he promised to come again, saying that 'whether ill or well, I must have an interview with her, and, in the language of her native country, announce that her tears and objections had wearied the Leader of the Faithful, who had resolved to *visit her to-night*, after evening prayer.'

Here was a startling announcement!

I felt inclined to cleave the negro's stolid visage as he made it!

"An additional incentive for coolness, determination, and immediate action," said Fred; "I had an idea that if our plot failed to-night, and the soldiers, whom I hope to drag and so secure their horses, recovered, we should not be suspected, and have time to make another essay, but this is now denied us, and the sultan's resolution decides it all."

"Yes—to-night we must all be clear of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, or we shall never leave it alive!"

The sun was verging to the westward, and throwing the shadows of rock and tree far along the valley.

"How slowly the time passes!" said I, with a sigh; "what is the hour?"

"Past four," said Fred.

"In three hours the crisis will be passed."

"For good or for evil, Frank—three hours are only one hundred and eighty minutes."

"Each of these minutes will seem an hour to me."

We reloaded our arms with peculiar care, and made all our preparations, with (I am not ashamed to say) hearts beating high and anxiously. The three pieces of portfire, which were of the usual length, about twenty-one inches, and composed of saltpetre, sulphur, mealed powder, and antimony, we concealed in one of the wooden partitions of an apartment adjoining our own, placing them close together, and tying to them the slow match, which we calculated would burn for at least an hour and a half, from the time of its being first lighted. These slow matches for artillery are made of hemp, slackly spun on the wheel, like a cord in three twists, and are boiled in the lees of old wine. When once ignited, they never go out, but slowly, surely, and gradually burn on to the end, and this end we tied to the inflammable portfire—thus a conflagration of some kind was certain. We then secured about our persons our purses and the letters of protection granted by Mohamed-al-Raschid, and our new friend the vizier.

Immediately after this, Fred departed with Amina on horseback to visit the tomb of the warlike Khassim (the founder of the throne of Yemen), which lay about two miles from the fort; and by his own request two of Mahmoud Ali Badr's mounted guardsmen accompanied them. How my heart leaped, till I was almost sick with anxiety, as I watched them depart; and after scrutinizing the horses of the Arab soldiers, I was glad to perceive that they rode strong, active, and beautiful animals.

The sun had now sunk lower, and as the gates were closed behind them, a hand laid familiarly on my shoulder made me start; I turned and met the hateful black visage and yellow eyeballs of Osman Oglou, the eunuch captain, who led me towards the brass portals of the seraglio. I excused myself for a moment—hurried to my apartment—coiled the rope under my benish, stuck my pistols in my belt, fired the slow-match with a cigar fusee, the last of two I had left, and then rejoined the miserable instrument of Eastern tyranny and sensuality, who was to conduct me to the splendid prison of Cecil.

Meanwhile, followed by the two soldiers of Ali Badr, Fred and Amina skirted the citron grove and rode to the tomb of the imaum Khassim, which consisted of a large and gilded dome, placed upon an open colonnade of grotesquely carved columns. These were built upon a platform or basement of nine deep oval arches. The edifice closely resembled an enormous punch-bowl inverted upon nine gigantic candlesticks. Under the dome was an erect tablet, to indicate the true direction of Mecca, towards which all faces must be turned in the time of prayer; and beside it gurgled a fountain, for executing the ablutions required by the Mohamedan religion. It was once the resort of all the santons, fakirs, dervishes, pious enthusiasts, and cunning impostors in Arabia; but, having lost its repute, was now crumbling into ruin, and little frequented.

There Amina was left to dip her pretty hands and say her prayers, while Fred invited the two Arabs to dismount, seat themselves on

the grass and light their chibouques, for which he gave them a liberal supply of opium and bang, proffering some brandy also, well drugged, from his flask. This they soon drained, nathless the law and the Prophet, for they were Bedouins, and, consequently, not very particular. All unused to such potent liquor, their eyes began to roll fearfully; they talked, laughed, shouted the *tecbir*, and made such an irreverend noise, that Amina rose repeatedly from the marble Kevlah in alarm; but the opium they were chewing and smoking soon prostrated every faculty, and in the course of half an hour they sank perfectly insensible on the grass.

Fred inwardly thanked Heaven for the success of his share of our scheme, and then, to the astonishment of Amina, he dragged the soldiers into the thicket, where he concealed, and tied them securely back to back by means of the loose sleeves of their overshirts and the cloth of their turbans. He then broke under foot their lances and sword blades; possessed himself of their ammunition, and carefully examined every buckle and strap of their horses' harness. He next turned to look at Hesn-al-Mouhabib, the Turkish towers, jagged ramparts, arabesque-sculptured galleries and pavilions of which crowned the beetling rock above the rich citron grove, about two miles distant, all reddened to the hue of dusky saffron in the last flash of the sun that had set; but no sign of fire was rising yet.

Hastily he informed Amina, whom his proceedings had considerably dismayed, with the circumstances of our plot; and when he had pointed to the wall of the ten pavilions, by which he expected Cecil and me to descend, she uttered a cry of terror, and, falling upon her knees, said,

"Go—go, but return quickly; oh, how I long to see this Frankish lady, whom your friend loves? He is brave, and she must love him well!"

Suddenly a faint yellow light began to shoot upward above the gilded terraces which formed the roof of the eastern wing; it grew broader, and became a column of smoke and flame, while the sound of gongs, like the rumble of distant thunder, came down the wadi on the soft, mild, evening wind.

Fred pressed Amina to his breast, kissed her brow, concealed her and her horse in one of the arches of the tomb, and imploring her, by all she held dear, to remain there till his return, he mounted his own horse, and, taking the other two by the bridle, dashed round the edge of the citron grove at full speed to the foot of the castle rock, and remained among the foliage near the place from which he expected to see us descend. He waited long in feverish anxiety, but no one appeared.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE WANING MOON.

I stood within the suite of pavilions, and as the setting sun shone through them, the brilliant tints of their painted windows fell with a thousand rainbow hues on the sparkling fountains and tessellated floors. I glanced anxiously at our place of rendezvous, the tomb of the Sultan Khassim, and far down the open valley saw its gilded dome above the citron trees shining in the sunbeams.

Whether it had occurred to the chief of the eunuchs that he had not fulfilled his duty while waiting for me on the former occasion by spending his time in the curtained passage, or whether this sable guardian of the Graces believed he would pass an hour more agreeably in the pavilions, I know not; but however, as the father of mischief would have it, he accompanied me into the suite of rooms, and, squatting himself on a carpet, lit his chibouque, and seemed resolved to remain during my interview with Cecil. My breath came thick and fast, for I knew we could only be rid of him by desperate means. He was a gigantic and powerful negro, armed with a sabre; but to this, if necessary, I could oppose both sword and pistols.

I found Cecil seated in a small alcove which opened off the inner pavilion, and the entrance to which was partly veiled by two festooned curtains of white silk. Above the arch was a turban, with a verse from the Koran. This little alcove was a kind of bed-closet; and notwithstanding the momentous crisis at which we had arrived, its magnificence reminded me of that gorgeous chamber which Plutarch describes in the palace of Persepolis; and, like the artificial vine which astonished Alexander, there was here a palm-tree, having a stalk of burnished gold with leaves of emeralds, and fruit of topazes from the island of Socotora. The posts of the bed were of ivory, carved as intricately as Chinese puzzle-balls; the carpets, hangings, cushions, and coverlets were all beautifully worked, and around it and over it were garlands of delicate flowers.

Pale, trembling, and ghastly in appearance, Cecil came out of the alcove, and drew near me. She would have thrown herself into my arms, but the figure of the eunuch behind me at some distance appalled her, and she let fall her veil. Apprised of a visit from the sultan, she had been bathed, perfumed, and decorated in the richest lace and most superb jewels by the women who had charge of the toilets and wardrobes. Alas! she was like a beautiful corpse; and being long since past weeping, her eyes had around them dark circles which gave an expression of deep grief to her face; and her whole spect frightened me.

"Cecil, for the love of God—take courage! I am come to free you, and have here concealed a rope by which you must drop from

the walls," said I, in a low whisper, which was needless, as I was not understood by the listener; "be firm—oh, be courageous—life, love, and liberty are hanging by a hair."

"But there are sentinels with loaded matchlocks on the walls that overlook these windows."

"Work will soon be found for them elsewhere, and my friend Langley, with fresh and active horses, awaits us in the citron grove below."

"My brave beloved Frank!—what perils—but that hateful eunuch is behind you."

I trembled with anger and perplexity, for I knew not how to rid myself quietly of this dangerous bar to every attempt at flight. Of that terrible time I can write with coolness *now*; but then, I lived, breathed, and moved as one in a dream! I thought and acted mechanically, and fortunate it is that I thought and acted in the rational manner I did. For my own life I had no care; of my own danger I took no heed, for the peril of Cecil alone unmanned and terrified me.

"This negro must be disposed of!" said I; "but how—I know not; kind Heaven! oh, direct me!" I added, fervently.

Cecil trembled and nearly fell, her emotions were so overpowering, and I dared not touch or support her while this man's eyes were upon us.

"Dearest Cecil," said I, with irrepressible anxiety; "you are ill? Ah, mercy if it should be so; for in what we are about to underge, your poor strength will be sorely overtaken."

"No—no—I am well—quite well and strong; I will brave everything!" she said, and clasped her trembling hands.

"We have far and fast to ride, without a guide, too; and this accursed negro—"

"Would to Heaven we were only beyond this prison! But oh, Frank, by what mercy are you allowed to visit me again?"

"Sent once more by Solyman to assure you of his undiminished—love, and to describe the splendours he has in store for you—"

Cecil wrung her hands and gazed at me with unspeakable agony, but to touch her was certain death, while the yellow eyes of the watchful negro were upon us. I walked to the window of the first pavilion; a casement was open, and I gazed anxiously down. It was at least fifty feet from the base of the wall, and a hundred from thence to the citrons at the foot of the rock. Cecil could never slide to the base of the rampart, for she had neither strength nor courage to retain the cord. Her delicate fingers would relax, and she was certain to fall.

Sentinels were still on the towers which flanked this curtain wall, but I hoped the bursting of the flames would soon attract them elsewhere.

Another plan was necessary; what could it be!

My head spun with excitement; the sun had set; the pale crescent

moon was glimmering at the end of the vale, and I remembered the words of the pampered despot ; now that moon was *waning*.

The eunuch coughed and struck his hands together, as a hint that he thought the time was come for retiring, and at that moment of sickly suspense and irresolution a distant noise struck my ear ; I looked at my watch ; three-quarters of an hour had elapsed since the slow-match had been lighted ; could the conflagration have begun already ? The noise increased, and again Osman Oglou clapped his sable hands impatiently.

I turned from the window with my head full of desperate thoughts, for this black eunuch was to be silenced in some way, or all was over. I dared not yet to fire a pistol, and with the sword his strength would no doubt overmatch mine, for his proportions were herculean.

Silent, irresolute how to act, and terrified by my own delay, I stood midway between Cecil and the negro, who cried to me angrily—

“It is time, O nakib, that we were retiring ; dost thou not hear the gongs ?”

“I thought of firing a pistol to disable him, or of rushing on and cutting him down. In the first case I risked an alarm ; in the second, both alarm and failure.

“Oh, Heaven—Heaven ! it is the imaum who comes already ! Frank, if there is yet time—Frank, save me—save me !” cried Cecil, in despair, as she grasped my sword-arm.

“It is impossible—I am mad !” said I, bursting into tears of rage and sorrow ; for at that moment the angry eunuch laid his strong hands upon my sword-arm, and dragged me hastily away, while a number of negro girls ran nimbly past us through the pavilions, lighting the silver lamps in each ; and then we heard the beating of gongs and drums, the discordance of fifes and bells, as Solyman was conducted on foot from the baths, through the ponderous brass gates of the seraglio wall.

All was over now !

I heard Cecil’s moan of despair ; I saw her sink on the carpeted floor with the arms of the wondering and pitying Abyssinian girls thrown around her ; and with a sigh of that voiceless bitterness which the human breast can feel but once, I thought of the leal-hearted Langley, who was no doubt waiting fruitlessly in the grove below with the horses of the drugged soldiers ; and I cursed the miserable irresolution which prevented me from shooting the captain of the eunuchs through the head half an hour before.

CHAPTER LV.

THE TEN PAVILIONS.

ALARMED by his own delay, the eunuch hurried me through the pavilions, along the curtained gallery, and down the long and intricate passages which were all plastered with chunam, ornamented with

gilded stucco arabesques, and lighted by perfumed lamps having coloured globes.

"Quick—quick," he cried, with undisguised alarm, "for here comes the sultan!"

In the desperation of the moment, one fortunate thought seized me; and in the crowd of attendants who accompanied the imaum to the inner door of the seraglio, I contrived to give Osman "the slip," to mingle with the guards and slaves, and then to conceal myself behind a painted column, where I saw Solymán pass, accompanied by Rábd-al-Hoosi with his jewelled turban, Ali Badr in his plumed headpiece, the katib with his snowy beard, and many others, and there they all bade him adieu for the night, with "hopes that pleasures awaited him—that his shadow might never be less," &c., and with that mixture of mummery and respect which pervades all the ceremonies connected with modern royalty, even in more civilised places than the kingdom of Yemen, retired slowly backward.

The inner doors, which were of cedar wood covered with ornaments of brass, were immediately closed by the guards, and I was *within* them!

In his night robes, *i. e.*, his drawers of fine cotton (all Eastern nations sleep thus), with a long gown of blue silk floating around him, his silvery beard spread over his bosom, and a fine caul on his head, I watched the old imaum, like a gliding spectre ascending the flight of marble steps which led to the pavilions, and my heart burned within me with anxiety and anger as I followed him.

The bath from which this sensual dotard had just come, had been filled with rose-water, and thus the atmosphere around him was redolent of perfume. Unheard on the soft carpets of those silent pavilions, I followed him like a shadow, and the aspect of those peculiar apartments was gorgeous, as seen then by the light of their crystal lamps, which, however, were not of sufficient brightness to eclipse the last flush of the west, or the paler light of the crescent noon without; thus, while the sparkling of the marble fountains, the splendour of the gilded cornices, and the richness of the flowers and painted arabesques were visible within, the brilliant hues of the stained Venetian casements, and the beaming of the stars without, mingled together to heighten the effect.

On seeing the dreaded sultan approach, Cecil, who had been upon her knees in the inner pavilion, rose to her full height, which was greater even than his, tore aside her veil, and gazed upon him with flashing eyes, and a countenance of ashy whiteness. The whole expression of her beautiful and usually sad features was changed, and a savage pride and determination pervaded them. I feared that she had possessed herself of some weapon; but she spread only her white hands as a shield before her, and Solymán (somewhat startled by her firm aspect) stood in the curtained archway and gazed upon her in silence.

In her terror, though she saw, she did not recognise me until I

was close beside her; when, overcome by an excitement, of which I can conceive few parallels, she sprang past the imaum with a low cry, and fell senseless, as if dead, in my arms. Quick as lightning he turned and fixed his green basilisk eyes upon me with a terrible expression! Fear was the first emotion of the tyrant, then rage and fury; and I almost laughed aloud in knowing that he and I were alone, beard to beard, in these lonely pavilions which none dared approach.

"Wretch—Kafir—dog!—at such a time—how art thou here?" he asked, in accents broken by the excitement which made him tremble; for to find a man alone and unwatched in the sacred precincts of the seraglio—and that man a Christian—to find that he had seen a woman there—a woman beloved by an imaum, and all unveiled—and had that woman hanging on his breast, encircled by his arms,—was a case so unparalleled, that Solyman could scarcely believe his own eyes; and unutterable wrath made them gleam like those of a serpent, while every hair of his beard and shaggy eyebrows seemed to bristle with the passion that convulsed him.

"Wallah! And by the ninety-nine names of Allah! By the fig and the olive! both thou and she shall be torn to shreds by the teeth and limbs of wild horses!" cried the sultan, striking a great gong, which for the purpose of alarm stood in this magnificent bedchamber; and like the report of a cannon it reverberated under the domed roofs of the ten pavilions. He then unsheathed his jewelled jambea, and with activity wonderful for his years, rushed upon me. But relinquishing Cecil, whom he also intended to slay, I received the short crooked blade on the edge of my own sword, and grasped him by the throat and beard with a clutch so tenacious, that the jambea fell from his hand; his caul was torn off, and the aspect of his aged head, which, either by shaving or time, was quite bald and smooth as a cannon ball, alone prevented me from turning the point of my sword upon him, for I was rendered blind by fury, and desperate by despair and insult.

For a moment I contemplated him with a ferocious glance, and saw the veins swelling on his bare scalp, as my grasp tightened on his lean and tawny throat; for a moment more I swung him to and fro, then dashed him from me, and he lay on the floor stunned, senseless, and perfectly still. In the excitement of the moment I had neither pity nor remorse.

Cecil was almost in the same inanimate condition as her tormentor; and now I heard the roar of gongs and the din of many human voices. Had the sultan's note of alarm been heard? Like pearls the perspiration rained over my burning forehead at the idea! but it was soon evident to me by the distant cries of terror and alarm that came through the open windows of the pavilions, with the unmistakeable odour of burning wood, that the conflagration had begun!

There was not a moment to be lost. The matchlock men had disappeared from the tower-head, and preparatory to lowering down

Cecil, as I proposed to do by giving the rope a turn round the wooden mullion of a window, I flung the coil over the wall to assure myself that it was of sufficient length; and in doing so—horror!—it slipped from my hand and fell upon the rocks far down—a hundred feet below! I gazed after it in speechless terror, and my soul seemed rising to my throat.

Our only chance of escape seemed gone—for ever gone!

From the citron grove beneath I heard a faint hallo ascending, and knew that my brave friend was there awaiting us—no doubt in great anxiety—and had observed me; but how to reach him without a miracle being performed, I could not conceive.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE CONFLAGRATION.

"CECIL, dearest Cecil," I exclaimed, rushing to her in unspeakable sorrow; "I have destroyed you! The rope is gone, and I can nowhere procure another now."

"The place seems on fire—can we not escape in the confusion?" she asked, with pale calmness.

"Any way it is death to us; come, Cecil, come. I have my sword and pistols, and if discovered, I will sell our lives dearly—four at least shall pay for the loss of two."

I threw my ample blue benish over her shoulders, placed my tarboosh on her head, concealing her luxuriant hair under it, and muffled up her pale, thin, and sorrowful face; I half carried, and half led her through the pavilions, down the marble steps, and reached the lower passages, which led to the brazen gate. All these were deserted, and the space beyond was filled with smoke; but here, like a storm of voices, we heard the clamours of the women in the saraglio and of their slaves, in all, more than nine hundred in number, screaming in all the dialects of Arabia and Egypt, as they rushed in crowds upon the flat roofs of the palace, and in the utmost alarm, although it was impossible that the fire could reach that wing of the great palatial fortress.

I had a cocked pistol in my hand, prepared to shoot dead the first man who attempted to obstruct us; but no soldier, eunuch, or slave appeared; all had evidently found ample occupation elsewhere. The double folds of the polished brass gates stood firm as a rock; there was no other mode of egress, and at the mouth of the pointed arch beyond them, we could see the wavering gleams of the fire; the curling smoke, and the bronze-like figures of the slaves, or the glittering ornaments of the soldiers, as they hurried to and fro in the quadrangle.

"I feel very faint, dear Frank," said Cecil, half sinking as she spoke; "I have a frightful sense of suffocation, and my head seems as if about to rend!"

"It is the smoke. Oh, Heaven! for one good blow of a hammer—one wrench with a crowbar!" said I, dashing myself fruitlessly against the gate.

I was about to try the effect of a pistol-shot on one of the bars, when a crowd of eunuchs rushed tumultuously into the archway, headed by the chief, by Rabd-al-Hoosi, and Ali Badr, with loud cries of "The sultan, the holy imaum! let us save the life of the holy imaum!" And I had barely time to drag Cecil behind the column—the same place where I had hidden before—when the ponderous gates were flung back with a crash, and the sable guardians of the seraglio sprung up the marble steps towards the pavilions, while at the same moment a living flood of Arab, Egyptian, and Coptish women, the ladies of the household, attended by Abyssinian slaves and other negresses, rushed down the flight of steps, and issued forth.

Cecil and I were borne out by the terrified throng, and, unnoticed, reached the quadrangle, where a scene of unexampled confusion and uproar was taking place. I retained her hand firmly in mine, for she was almost delirious with terror.

"Courage—courage," said I, "we shall soon reach our horses; all depends upon coolness and bravery now. Oh! Cecil, we are almost free!"

She made an incoherent reply.

"Do you hear me, my beloved Cecil?" I asked, anxiously.

"I am ill—ill. Oh, that I were dead and at rest!"

"For Heaven's love, if not for the love of me, bear up a little yet," said I, imploringly.

The dangers and sorrows of so many months had produced the most dire effects upon her mind and body. She was now almost helpless as a child, and I trembled lest she should swoon altogether. From the burning wing, or eastern front of the quadrangle, a flood of light was shed on all the rest of the castle. The whole of that side of the edifice, with its painted and gilded galleries, was now on fire; the flames flashed through the oval arches of the windows and licked the fretted carving of the battlements; through the doors below and the domes above, through the towers and round the gilded minarets, till they all united aloft in one blazing pyramid of solid and roaring fire. Ponderous beams, marble columns, rich cornices of white chunam, laden with pots of blooming flowers; showers of flat tiles and masses of mason-work fell thundering in at times; but the greedy flames rolled on from partition to partition, and leaped from floor to floor in such uncontrollable fury, that I feared it would soon reach to the seraglio, the most splendid and ancient portion of this far-famed castle of the Graces; and for an instant I was appalled by the destruction I had made.

The Arabs gazed on it in apathetic consternation, neither knowing how or why to stop the flames; for the doctrine of fatality is so strongly impressed upon them by their religion, that believing, if the

castle was ordained to be burned, all the efforts of the Moslemum could not save it, they chewed their quids of opium, stroked their beards, and muttered from time to time—

"Oh day of misfortune! Dogs that we are, why has this dust fallen upon our heads!" and so forth; and frequently they shouted, "Allah Ackbar!" when an unusually large mass fell down, or a greater flame shot up; but they did no more. Meanwhile the wild and wailing cries of the frightened inmates of the seraglio made up a startling medley of discord.

Profiting by this general confusion and consternation, we reached the gates unnoticed, and passed them unseen, for all the guards were gone, and we hurried down the steep and winding path which led to the foot of the eminence. The starry sky was unusually brilliant and clear, even for Arabia, the land of the sun; on this night the transparent atmosphere rendered every object distinct to a vast distance, and nothing could be more terrible and magnificent than the vast column of red and yellow light, which arose from the summit of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, lighting up the windings of the distant stream, its groves of lime and citron trees, the drooping palms that stood afar off, like funeral plumes, on the mountain sides, where the startled goats were browsing, and every leaf in the wooded vale below, where the gilded dome of Khassim's tomb gleamed as if tipped with liquid fire.

"And all this frightful destruction has been for me!" said the pale Cecil, looking back, as we hurried breathlessly on.

"What matters it," said I, almost gaily, "in this land of gold and precious stones; old Solyman, if he is not burned by this time, will soon repair the damage."

We hastened round the base of the eminence to the citron wood, every stem and leaf of which were tipped with light, for the liquid dew lay heavy on them. Here I halloed aloud, and received a joyful reply.

"Bravo! thank Heaven you have come at last," said Langley, as he rode out from the thicket with two spare horses; "it is an hour past the time I calculated on, and I had given you both up for lost! Welcome to liberty, my dear Miss Marchmont—I am an old friend—Fred Langley of 'the Queen's Own,'—remember you well at Chatham. Mount! mount! there is not a moment to lose now! I have manufactured a kind of saddle for you by means of my knife, with a handkerchief and the branch of a tree."

As Fred gave Cecil his hand she was so excited and overjoyed to hear another English tongue, that she actually kissed him, and burst into tears, as he lifted her at once on horseback.

"Now," said Fred, who had no time to spare for surprise, "away for the tomb of Khassim; I fear that Amina will be half dead of terror by this time, poor little thing!"

"Hark!" said I, while leaping on horseback; "there is thunder!"

"Oh, no, no," said Cecil, whipping up her horse in great alarm : "it is the gong of the guards—our flight has been discovered."

It sounded like a peal of thunder, as it rolled away over our heads on the clear and rarefied atmosphere. Again and again it roared on the calm night—the horrible note of this gigantic gong, and every stroke found an echo in our hearts. This was a somewhat sacred instrument, and only used on the most solemn and sacre occasions.

The flame on the summit of the rocks and towers was now sinking fast, and on looking back, I thought I could discern a cloud of white objects dotting the dark side of the hill; but whether these were large stones, a flock of sheep, or the guards of Ali Badr, it was impossible to say, for we were riding at full speed, and the twilight was deepening on the scenery.

The pale moon rested on the edge of the distant mountains; a red light lingered in the west; a stupendous column of smoke overhung the summit of Hesn-al-Mouhabib; and now the tomb of the imaum was close by; we had already ridden two miles.

"Now, dear Cecil," said I, "we can talk of our escape, and laugh at its terrors."

"Laugh at them! my beloved Frank, can you already think of such a thing? oh, never, never!" she replied with a shudder.

"Pshaw!" said I, with affected cheerfulness, for I was greatly alarmed lest an illness conduced by terror and over-excitement should incapacitate her for pursuing the long and arduous journey that lay before us; "the first and the worst of our dangers are past; compose yourself, my dear, good Cecil. Think of the lives kind Heaven has spared us, and of our future happiness. Oh, we shall have ten thousand questions to ask each other and to answer! Dear, dear Cecil!" I added, with a sigh of joy, as we drew up our panting horses beside the tomb of Khassim.

Fred dismounted, threw the bridle of his horse to me, and hastened to the arch where he had left Amina.

She was not there; neither was her horse!

"Amina! Amina!" I heard him cry in great excitement.

But there was no reply. The tomb was lonely and silent; save the gurgle of the fountain that flowed before its keblah, there was no sound within it.

Amina and her horse had disappeared!

CHAPTER LVII.

THE GHOULE BIABAN.

LEFT beside that ancient tomb, with the shadows of the mountains falling across the valley, and the trees growing darker as the daylight waned. Amina grew rather alarmed, as there came floating

before her, the memory of many a story of ravenous Ghoules, who disinterred and devoured the bodies of the dead; of wicked genii, who wrought all manner of mischief, and bore young maidens away; and if idolatrous Guebres, or worshippers of the sacred fire, who murdered isolated wayfarers as offerings to their false god; and she remembered to have heard that the flat vale of Hesn-al-Mouhabib was the haunt of the *Ghoule Biaban*, or Spirit of the Waste, a lonely, frightful, and gigantic spectre, who formed the mirage of the desert, and devoured all who fell into his power. She had heard it also said, that the imaum Khassim, though invisible to mortal eyes, frequently sat at the head of his own tomb after sunset, inhaling the odour of the fresh garlands and perfumed offerings which were hung there.

These terrible ideas hovered in the mind of poor Amina, till she became half-frozen with fear; while slowly and imperceptibly the saffron tints of evening deepened into the purple and sombre shadows of night. Every sound, even the whirl of a leaf, startled her, and from time to time, for lack of better companionship, she spoke to the beautiful Arab horse, which stood near the carpet on which she was seated, and with her pretty hand she stroked its slender legs and square quivering nostrils from time to time.

The tomb and its vicinity were still as a house of death may be, and the evening wind sighed under the old gilded dome, and whistled through the fretted carving of the columns which supported it. Cattle lowed at times, and sheep bleated in the distance. The last flush of the faded eve shone down the valley, and Amina's tears were just beginning to fall, when an old Arab shepherd drew near to say his prayers.

Amina, who feared every one, scarcely drew her breath, yet she hoped he would remain until Langley rejoined her. It was so dreary, that old tomb, with the dead imaum mouldering in his sarcophagus close beside her!

The aged Arab, being without a piece of carpet, knelt down on the grass, and there said the fifth prayer necessary in the twenty-four hours, being that which it is ordained every good Mussulman must say before the day closes in, and before the first watch of the night. Low, and lower still the old man bent his turbaned head in prayer, as the moon's pale crescent rose above the black ridge of the dusky and distant mountains.

When his orisons were ended, this old man, who seemed a shepherd, by his crooked staff and leathern bottle, departed, and Amina regretted that she had not begged him to remain with her, for his aspect was both venerable and kind, and the time-worn tomb was lonelier now than ever.

He had not been long away, when a sound reached her of voices conversing and singing a monotonous Arab ditty. The horse erected its ears, switched its tail, and pawed the earth. Amina thought again of the *Ghoule Biaban*, trembled, and prayed to Fa-

time; but this time the visitors were four ragged Bedouins, (robbers apparently,) of the tribe Sheikh Ibrahim; fierce, lawless, and wild men, from Roba-el-Khaly, or the Abode-of-Emptiness. They stopped at the well, yet neither to wash nor pray, but to mix the water of the holy fountain with the fire-water of the Faringis—*i. e.*, a quart bottle of potent eau-de-vie, which they became possessed of.

They all wore turbans, of course; one had a blue shirt, but the other three had only a cummerbund; thus their brawny bosoms and muscular legs and arms were like those of oak statues.

Veiling herself and trembling, Amina remained close and unseen in the arch of the basement; but unfortunately, the acute faculties of her Arab horse made it aware that one of the Bedouins carried a bag of corn, and as her evil geni would have it, the animal uttered a loud neigh of satisfaction.

"Wallah!" swore a Bedouin, springing away from the fountain; "there is a horse in the tomb! didst thou hear it, Soupki?"

"It is the voice of the Ghoule Biaban," said one.

"Perhaps it is the enchanted steed of the sultan Khassim," said another.

"By the grot of Mount Hara, I care not a grain of sand, were it all three put together," said the fourth, unsheathing his jambea; "and I shall know what it is, though Eblis barred the way!"

The bold fellow ran round the tomb, and soon discovered the trembling Amina. For a moment he conceived her to be a spirit, as her dress was white; but perceiving that she wept, he uttered a cry of triumph, seized her by one hand, and the horse's bridle by the other, and brought both out into the twilight, before his companions;—for these Arabs plunder and fight in the most civilized districts of Arabia and Egypt, just as they do in the wildest deserts. Amina was overcome by terror, and stood mute before them. One drew aside her veil, and her beauty charmed and excited them. At this insult her large black eyes filled with light; a flush came over her beautiful face, and her little bosom heaved with the liveliest indignation.

"Stand back," she exclaimed; "I am the sister of Mohamed, the Abdala!"

"If you were the sister of Solyman, the sultan," said one of the drunk Bedouins, "I will kiss your mouth. Barek Allah! It is like the incense of Hadramaut!"

Though her small hands trembled like the leaves of the aspen-tree, she thrust back the Arab with no slight force; and then he who had discovered her interposed, saying, with a guttural oath, that she was his, as well as the horse, but that the three might have it with its housings, provided he was allowed to retain the damsel, without molestation, as his own prize—and his, he was resolved she should be, though all Yemen should say nay.

"Perhaps," said one, "she has escaped from the Castle of the Graces."

"Let us take her there," said a second; "old Solyman, or his vizier, Rabd-al-Hoosi, will give us each a thousand piastres for such a damsel."

"No—no," said a third; "Barek Allah! let us cast lots for her."

"By God and the Prophet," cried the fourth, in great wrath, "what right hast thou, Mustapha, or thou Soupki, to a share of her value; or what right hast thou, Jelalodin, to require that lots be cast for her? I tell you all," he continued, grasping Amina's right arm with his left hand, while he interposed his sharp, and yet unsheathed jambea, "that the woman is mine; and if I allow you to keep the horse, with his saddle and bridle, I allow too much. And rather than cast lots for her person or share her value, I will cut off her head—by the soul of Khaled the Blessed, I will!"

"This is too much," said he whom they called Soupki; "what care I for a horse, which is not of pure breed, as one may see by its ears and fetlocks; so, may I die, if thou shalt have the damsel without a struggle."

"And I, too," added Jelalodin.

"Mustapha, thou hast a bow and arrows; let us each shoot one, and he whose shaft goeth farthest, shall have the damsel—the next the horse—the third the housings—and the fourth, or weakest, may well go without anything."

"I will not shoot one shaft," said Ali, shaking with rage; "the Koran saith, 'that wine, lots, images, and *divining arrows*, are an abomination, and the work of Satan; therefore avoid them, that ye may prosper;' and I will avoid them, for I am not drunk, like the whole three of you; and so, will keep this fair gift which the Prophet hath given me."

Soupki rushed upon Amina, with his jambea, to slay her, and so defraud them all; but Ali, who was a powerful ruffian, hurled him to the earth by one blow. A desperate struggle was about to ensue, when a bright column of flame, that shot upward from Hesn-al-Mouhabib, arrested their attention, and for a time they gazed at it in astonishment, and heedless of Amina's tears and prayers that they would set her free.

Suddenly the sound of a horse's hoofs were heard, and as a mounted man appeared, Amina uttered a cry of joy, for she believed he was Langley, returning.

"Save me, save me, love of the most beloved!" she cried; "for I am in the hands of those who will destroy me. Alas! alas!" she added, wringing her hands, as the horseman came up and proved to be neither Langley nor me, but a handsome and richly accoutred Arab gentleman, the harness of whose white charger was adorned by innumerable tassels of scarlet silk and silver, and who wore a mail shirt of polished rings, a plumed skull-cap of steel, a sword slung on one side of him, a buckler on the other, and a long musket strapped across his back.

"Beware," muttered Ali; "it may be the *Ghoule Biaban*!"
 "Or the spirit of *Khassim*!" said Soupki; and they all shrunk back with affright.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HOW THE ROBBERS LOST AMINA.

"**BAREK ALLAH** — praise be to God; I have arrived in time to prevent bloodshed, I think!" said this stately Arab, on seeing the Bedouins with their unsheathed jambeas glittering in the starlight; "allow me to be your umpire, my friends, for peacemakers are blessed. What is all this strife about?"

"You will save me from these men, will you not?" asked Amina, imploringly, of the stranger, who gazed upon her with silent admiration, as he urged his horse near her, and stooped from his high-peaked saddle inquiringly, till his plume almost brushed her charming face—for her veil had, by this time, been completely torn away.

"Silence," said Ali, huskily, as his vice-like grasp tightened on her slender arm to the point of agony; "silence, or I will turn my jambea round your neck."

"This woman," said Soupki, "belongs to the Abdali, with whom we are at war; we have taken her; she is the lawful prize of all, yet Ali claims her as his."

"Is this just?" demanded Mustapha and Jelalodin, together.

"It *is* just," said the stranger, "if Ali found her."

Amina's heart sank at these words.

"Alas!" thought she; "he will not save me!"

"Thou art right, warrior," said Ali; "for it was I who found her."

"But we were all present," added Soupki; "therefore let lots be cast, either by coins or shooting arrows, for I will not lose the damsel and content me with a share in a half-bred horse without a struggle."

"Ali knows the injustice of his claim," said Jelalodin, "and will not trust to the wise decision of fate."

"I have no fear of fate; but I fear God too much to be in dread of him favouring such a slave as thee!"

"Wallah!" swore the other; "we shall soon see whose blood is reddest!"

"Peace," said the stranger, with a lofty air of authority, as he roughly urged his horse between them. "And so, damsel, thou art an Abdala?" he added, gazing upon Amina with undisguised admiration. "But how come you to be straying here, like a lost dove?"

Amina made no reply, but her tears fell fast.

"Hast thou escaped from *Hesn-al-Mouhabib*, which now we see

flaming yonder on the mountain-top! If so, all who have looked on thine unveiled face may tremble for the wrath of Solymán; it is like wind of the desert, overtaking all whom it pursues."

At this remark, the Bedouins gazed on each other with something of alarm, and fearing to be deprived of their prey altogether, agreed to leave the whole power of decision in the hands of the stranger.

After hearing all their arguments, during which Amina trembled, wept, and writhed like a poor bruised butterfly, in the iron grasp of Ali, he asserted that, as all their claims were equal and just, lots must be cast for the damsel.

"But," said he, "though the Holy Prophet has expressly forbidden the use of arrows, he said nothing about musket-shot, so the possession of this beautiful maiden shall fall to him who brings to me *yonder bird* the moment it falls."

As he spoke, he unslung his musket, cocked the match, raised the butt to his shoulder, and fired at a large eagle which had been scared from its eyry by the flames of the burning castle, and was now winging its way through the clear evening sky, about two hundred yards off. The moment this Arab discharged his musket, a faint cry was heard, the great eagle wheeled round in the air, and fell to the earth like a stone. The Bedouins uttered a shout of admiration at the skilful shot, and ran with the speed of hares to lift and bring the bird, which would secure to the producer thereof undisputed possession of Amina.

"Allah Ackbar!" cried the handsome horseman, with a merry laugh; "God is great, and my aim is true." And while the four Bedouins rushed in one direction after the fallen eagle, he snatched up Amina, and galloped with her in the other, leaving the outwitted robbers to rend the bird, and their beards to boot, in their rage and disappointment.

Aided by the flames of the burning castle, which brilliantly lighted all the valley, Messieurs Ali, Soupki, Mustapha, and Jelalodin, discharged all their abuse, and three shafts, after the mounted warrior; but his fleet Arab horse soon bore him and his beautiful prize far beyond the reach of taunts and of arrows.

Finding themselves thus outwitted, they immediately made off with the horse, lest, by some sudden stroke of misfortune, they should be deprived of that too.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE CHIEF OF THE EUNUCHS.

It would be difficult to describe the alarm and grief occasioned to poor Langley by the mysterious disappearance of Amina, or the sincere concern I felt in my own breast, which only a moment before had been brimming with joy and ardour, excited by the

successful escape of Cecil from the dangers which menaced and encompassed her. Twenty times Langley hastened round the tomb, and searched all the arcades of the basement; he examined all the thickets, but found only the two Arabs where he had left them, bound, gagged, and buried in their unnatural slumber; and now the double conviction, that she was indeed gone, and that we dared not stay, forced itself upon him, and he stood before us with an air of bewilderment.

Until that time, I had no idea how deeply he loved her. I dared scarcely to say a word of encouragement or endearment to Cecil, lest, by doing so, I should add to the poignancy of poor Fred's sorrow. A hasty examination of the grass near the tomb, proved by the marks of hoofs that horses had passed both eastward and westward of it; the one were those of the horse led away by the Bedouins—the former those of the horseman who bore off Amina. And, indeed, we soon discovered an indisputable trace of her, for the string of her large chaplet of those amber beads, ninety-nine in number, which all Moslem's use in prayer, had been broken as she was lifted from the ground, and these were sown along the grass in a direct line eastward on the path we were to pursue. This was fortunate.

Fred picked up a number of these, and kissed them with the greatest affection, and with more of romance in his manner than I could have believed such a man of the world could exhibit. I had by this time made Cecil aware of whom he expected to have met, and of his loss and disappointment. Such was the force of old politeness and her natural kindness, that she expressed the deepest regret for having been, in some measure, the occasion of his calamity.

"Do not upbraid yourself, my dear Miss Marchmont," said Fred, as he wiped from his pale and handsome face the perspiration wrung from him by this new cause for sorrow and alarm. "I now feel shame for my paltry English prejudices of race and religion; I now feel the full value of the pure jewel I have lost, and learn, in the torture of my heart, the love I bore Amina, my dear little Arabian girl! It is one of those passions we can feel but once in a lifetime. Oh, yes! once, and once only! Can you understand this?"

"Yes," faltered Cecil, while the tears fell fast over her pale and agitated face; "but, oh listen!" she added, with a shuddering expression of terror, as the wind brought towards us the noise of a gong and the patter of an Arab drum, with the conviction that, to delay a moment longer, would destroy us all; and as the last gleam of flame expired on the distant summit of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, we set off, at our horses' utmost speed, towards the East.

Fred's only thought was to overtake Amina, and incessantly, until he was hoarse, he cried her name aloud, though such an action was fraught with danger to us all. My sole idea, then, was to cross the Hargiah, which forms a junction with the Shab, a few miles

below the small city of Mouab, after which their united waters roll together into the Indian Ocean, or rather, the Arabian Gulf.

It was in vain that I endeavoured to account for the absence of Amina. In a wild and lawless country like Yemen, there could be no end to dark and terrible conjectures; and the circumstance of her broken chaplet being strewed along the ground, afforded painful evidence of a violent, at least a hurried departure from the tomb of Khassim. Langley's regrets were the more bitter, because he might so easily have taken her with him to the foot of the castle rock, but had unfortunately deemed it better to spare her strength; and, moreover, he believed her to be perfectly safe in that sequestered and consecrated shrine.

It was in vain also that we bade him take courage, and hope that we would soon discover some trace of her.

"I thank you, Hilton," said he, with assumed calmness, as we paused a moment to breathe our horses and procure for Cecil a draught of water; "I thank you for your many kind efforts and soothing suppositions, but be assured they are offered in vain. By the events of to-night we have opened up an impassable gulf between ourselves and the people of Sana. As Christians, as Faringis, as fugitives, we must avoid every settlement and village, every Arab town and Bedouin tent; for in the most remote corner of Europe we should be safer than we are here. Then how shall I discover any trace of her? And before we can reach the castle of the Abdali, and have Mohamed to prosecute another, perhaps, most fruitless search, what terrible events may not have happened to Amina, in a land like this, where women are pounced upon as lawful prizes—borne away, bought and sold, secreted and married, divorced or murdered, at the caprice of their lawless husbands or masters. Oh, no; we shall never see Amina more. Would to Heaven, my dear fellow, I had never come to Sana—that I had never known or never seen her, and then I had not suffered all this misery!"

I felt the truth and force of all Fred said, and could only sigh and be silent, as, after listening intently, without hearing any sound of pursuit, we once more spurred on our horses by the base of those green hills whose chain undulated away towards the country of Himiar.

On this night the dew fell less heavily than usual, but the closeness of the atmosphere was stifling, and though Cecil uttered no complaint, I could perceive by the mournful tone of her answers that she was sinking with lassitude, excitement, and fatigue. A halt for rest was absolutely necessary, as we had traversed at a hard pace nearly thirty miles of a wild and uncultivated tract of country. Inky clouds rolled slowly and heavily across the sky, obscuring the stars and shrouding its brilliant blue in a dusky pall; the scenery became—what one seldom sees it in Yemen—perfectly dark, and for a time I was pleased by the change, as I thought it favoured our flight, and knew not what that change portended. But we had no

longer any guide as to the direction to be pursued, for the moon had sunk and the stars were completely hidden from us.

Passing a deep and savage ravine, which had been formed partly by the winter storms, we found ourselves on the borders of what appeared to be an immense forest of lime, date, and palm-trees, where the low but massive ruins of some ancient walls were visible among the matted leaves and tendrils of the creeping plants—the fragrant senna, the wild figs and vines which, with a thousand luxuriant tropical weeds and flowers, were all twisted into a mass of green jungle, under which we heard the loud buzz of the wild honey-bees. Here a fountain bubbled under a broken arch, and we hastened to avail ourselves of it.

In morbid silence, Fred seated himself on the ruined wall, with a hand on his horse's bridle.

The excitement of riding, the idea of avoiding a pursuit, the hopes that we *might* be on Amina's track, or have a struggle at the sword's point, alone kept him from sinking under his sudden loss; but as he had ridden on, the bitter conviction became confirmed, that every pace of his horse was now bearing him further and further from that locality where, dead or alive, captive or free, Amina could only be found, and with this flight all hope of rescuing or recovering her died in his breast.

Seated on this broken wall, with the dark ravine through which we had passed behind and the vast depth of the Arabian forest before us, Cecil drooped her head on my shoulder, and I placed one arm and hand around her; the other held the reins of our horses.

"Can it be that your friend loved that fair Moslema so much?" she asked me, softly, as we heard from time to time the sighs and ejaculations of Langley, who sat but a little apart from us on the ruined wall.

"She was a very beautiful Arab girl, Cecil."

"Ah!" said she, with a shudder, as she closed her eyes; "if he knew so much of Arabs as I do, he would never desire to see their faces more."

"But Amina was artless, innocent, and winning as a little child, Cecil; besides, we cannot control our hearts at all times."

She pressed my hand in hers, and as I kissed her upturned brow, it was throbbing, hot, and feverish.

"Frank," said Langley, coming suddenly towards me, "this agony is insupportable! I trust Miss Marchmont will excuse my excited manner, and pardon my determination, which is to leave you and her here—"

"To leave us!" I exclaimed.

"To leave you," he reiterated, with sorrowful emphasis; "continue your way to Aden. May God bless you, Frank Hilton, and may you be happy together!" he added, putting a foot in the stirrup of his saddle.

"Fred—Fred Langley—this must not be!" said I, springing to the bridle of his horse. "How can I return alone—how leave you here? What excuse could I make to O'Hara—to the regiment—to myself, for doing so?"

"Anything—anything you please. My dear Hilton, you cannot accompany me, as Miss Marchmont's safety must be secured; but for myself, alone I will return for Amina, as I have sworn never to see Aden without her."

"Stay," I cried, holding in his horse with all my strength—and at that moment my own snorted and neighed; "do you hear that?" I added; "horsemen are near us, for this is an infallible sign."

"Hah!—do you think so?" said Langley, setting his teeth and unbuttoning his holsters, while he tried his horse's mouth with the bit to be ready for anything. I lifted Cecil into her saddle, and sprang on horseback, for now the rush of galloping horses was echoed in the mountain pass, and then in the stony ravines below. They were evidently on our track.

Cecil uttered a half-stifled cry of terror as we leaped our horses sheer over the ruined wall, and forced a passage through the jungle by hewing it with our swords, as I rode in front and Fred by her side. Penetrating into the wood, we found a clear but narrow path, formed by the passage of those torrents of water which, in the winter season, descend from the mountains to the Shab and the Hargiah.

We were scarcely a musket-shot distant from our last halting-place by the fountain, when, amid the clang of hoofs, the neighing of horses, the rattle of chain-shirts and steel bucklers, and the clamour of many voices in guttural Arabic, we heard a half-human and half-infernal shout of triumph—such a shout as only a negro-throat can emit.

"Protect us, Heaven!" exclaimed Cecil, almost paralysed, "we are lost! It is the voice of Osman Oglou, the chief of the eunuchs!"

The marks of hoofs around the wall, the bruised grass, the crushed leaves and broken branches, announced that we had been there; thus we were discovered, even in the twilight, by the acute and observant Arabs, and already they were close on our trail—but they failed to follow it up.

All that night, and all the next day, we remained in the recesses of the wood, without sustenance, and in great alarm; for occasional cries and shots in the distance announced that we were still watched and followed.

It was a long and dreary day of mental excitement and bodily inaction, and wearily we counted the lagging hours.

Night came again; we mounted our horses, reached the forest-path, and again set out on our perilous journey.

CHAPTER LX.

HASSAN ALI THE DYER.

THE path soon brought us to the skirts of the wood again, and before us spread an open country, covered—so far as the gloom of the night enabled us to see—by enclosures of growing wheat and barley, and by great brown wastes, where the stubbles of the last crops of dhourra, maize and safra were remaining.

The ground was soft, the country level, the boundaries, or fences, if there were any, undiscernible; and we rode furiously on, dashing through tufts of sugar-cane, coffee-trees, and balm-shrubs, and frequently our horses were nearly brought down by the creeping esculents that lay matted on the ground and seized their fetlocks, such as melons, gourds, and other plants, from under which the beautiful little gazelle, the jerboa, and the antelope, were startled, and fled from us in every direction.

Several shots that were fired after us, now announced that we were seen, and that our chances of escape were lessening fast. We heard the crash of branches, shrubs, and bushes, as the horsemen came on, with that speed which the horses of Sana alone can display; and we heard, moreover, the shrill shouts of the Arab soldiers, and the deep bass of Osman Oglou, as, full of particular vengeance against me, he urged them in the pursuit.

"Allah Ackbar!" the incessant exclamation and invariable *teclir* of the Arabs, rose up into the still night air; while solely intent on escaping the present pressing danger, we rode recklessly on, and in ignorance of the direction we pursued; and neither Fred nor I fired a shot in reply, knowing well that shot and powder would be wasted, as the aim of a horseman is seldom true.

In the speed at which we rode, the excitement of the time, the dread I felt lest one of their random shots should strike Cecil, or lame one of our horses, I did not perceive the change that had taken place in the weather, and the lowering of the storm that was coming to save us from the foe. A range of hills now rose before us, and that range was cleft by a deep and narrow pass, which our horses seemed to approach instinctively. The dark but transparent blue of the sky became pale and livid; a watery mist arose from the hitherto arid soil, and a sulphureous odour was emitted with it; while the leaves of the trees trembled as the breath of the coming tempest passed over them.

Suddenly a strange sound hurtled through the sky.

"What is that?" said Langley; "is it cannon?"

"It is thunder," I answered; "do you not see the lightning playing between these mountain-peaks?"

"How close the atmosphere has become—good Heavens, it is stifling!" said Cecil, shortening her reins.

"*Rain!*" I exclaimed, with astonishment, and not a little alarm as one large and warm drop plashed upon my face; then I felt another, and another, as we dashed up the mountain pass. "There will be a storm, and a fearful one! Oh, Cecil, you may escape the Arabs, but how the storm—the storm?"

The dusky night suddenly became like a black and palpable vapour shrouding the sky and the mountains, whose peaks could only be discerned when the lightning, either in broad red sheets or in fork and zigzag yellow bolts, shot along, as if dancing from one bare and rocky scalp to another. The warm and suffocating wind howled through the mountain gorge, and the hurtling thunder rolled along the thick, black sky over our heads. It was appalling! but anon died away in the distance, reverberating as peak after peak gave back the sound, until comparative silence ensued, and then we heard and felt the rain, as it can only be heard and felt in the tropics, and especially in this corner of Arabia.

It was an unusual season of the year for rain, which generally falls in Yemen during June and until September. In the adjacent Khalafat of Hadramaut, the rains begin in February, and cease entirely in April; but in the hot, scorched, arid promontory of Aden it never falls but *once* in three years, and then it comes in such torrents as to remind us of the words of Scripture, and to make us suppose that again "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of Heaven opened;" for on the 29th of December, 1842, in five hours there fell five inches of rain, and such a vast body of water poured down from the mountains, that tent and bungalows were swept away, the cantonments destroyed and immense mischief occasioned; then the cholera followed for there had been no fall of any consequence for *fourteen* years before.

In one vast, broad, and united torrent, the hot, heavy, and sulphureous rain descended on the mountains and the plain; in one second of time we were drenched, in the next, we were half-blinded and half-choked, and our horses, which, when terrified by the thunder, had increased their speed to a fearful swiftness, now relaxed it, and advanced slowly into that deep pass of the hills which led we knew not where—it might be, back to Sana. The gorge was rapidly becoming like a mountain torrent, as the water from a thousand little runnels collected into a broad stream and rolled past us in foam. Innumerable white spouts, cascades, and brooklets now poured down the hill sides and faces of the basaltic rocks; every rut, rent, and cranny became a channel—every channel a brook—every brook a torrent; and all this was visible every instant by the blue and ghastly gleams of lightning. So were every rock, herb, and tree, our flushed faces, and our panting horses, from which the steam arose in vapoury curls for they were drenched in foam before the

rain fell, and the white froth from their bridles spotted the grass, the shrubs, and the deepening water.

Buffeted by the gusts of wind that swept over these mountains, we rode blindly on. I know not what Fred Langley was thinking of; the fury of the storm was probably in unison with the tumult of his own thoughts; but my terror, on the one hand, lest Cecil should be recaptured, and my anxiety, on the other, for the hardships she underwent, afforded me sufficient occupation and caused me to endure additional misery; yet I never ceased encouraging her to ride on—*on*—and applauded the brave efforts she made to keep up with us, as we cantered on neck-and-neck together. Love makes us very selfish in some respects, I fear, for my sympathies were all for Cecil, while Fred's were doubtless nearly all for Amina.

We soon cleared the mountain pass, and the current which flooded it having hitherto run against us now descended with us into the opposite plain or wadi, for we were unable to discern for a time which of the two we were traversing. The rain, which for three hours had fallen in a broad and united torrent, now ceased, and we heard only the roar of the cascades, and the hoarse gurgle of the waters through the choked-up runnels and rents in the ground; the lightning became fainter, and flashed farther off; the thunder ceased to roll overhead, it sounded on the verge of the horizon, and after a time we heard it no more.

Thanks to this fearful storm, we had escaped our pursuers, and I hoped that a little rest and refreshment would restore the energies of Cecil, and enable us to continue our flight with ease and success. Like mighty veils of sombre gauze the clouds were drawn aside, and joyously we hailed the blue zenith with all its sparkling stars.

Grey dawn stole along the summits of the drenched mountains, and then the saffron day spread a glow across the eastern sky, tinged with orange tints the moisture that glittered on every palm and shrub, and the foam-covered waters that rushed through the valley to join the Shab. The brightly plumaged birds came forth and shook their wings; a thin, white, silvery mist arose from the herbage, and everything announced the day would be one of intense heat—and such it proved. We rode on in silence, and it would be impossible to depict our miserable and wo-begone aspect, after that midnight ride under such a tempest of rain.

I looked back towards the mountains we had left, but no pursuers appeared, and I devoutly hoped they had all tumbled into one of the water-courses and been swept away. We were traversing a green and fertile, but lonely valley, overlooked by high green hills; dense thickets closed its lower end; a small tower, the abandoned strength of some departed tribe, crowned a fragment of rock on our left-hand; grim and tall, it resembled the peel of a Scottish baron, but we avoided it, and, dipping into the lowest part of the hollow, saw far off, at its extremity, a long string of camels passing, as I supposed from Mooha towards Mareh.

The lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, and the howling or barking of watchdogs, among the sombre cypresses of a cemetery, announced that we were near an Arab village; and we soon saw the smoke of its fires curling through the air. This rendered the utmost circumspection necessary, and we retired into one of the palm thickets that grew on the slopes of the valley. Here Cecil lay down on a piece of rock, for all around was damp and wet as her own garments, and while Langley endeavoured to kindle a fire, I groomed the horses and prepared our pistols for any emergency.

The absolute necessity of procuring some refreshment for Cecil, and also of ascertaining the direct way to Aden, compelled us to make an application at the village, and Fred being aware that I could acquit myself among these Orientals better than he, assented at once to my making an essay, against which my poor Cecil was too weak and too much prostrated in energy to make any opposition, otherwise than by the silent tears that coursed over her pale face and mingled with the moisture that clung to her dark and dishevelled hair, as with a farewell kiss I left her, and rode towards the village, which was built round a holy tomb and well. The hour was yet so early that few persons were abroad, and I rode up to a venerable Arab, who was at work near the door of his flat-roofed cottage, and who appeared to be a dyer of those striped mantles generally worn by the Bedouins. To avoid exciting any unnecessary suspicion, I inquired the way to Sana, being well aware that our route must lie in the opposite direction.

He told me without hesitation, adding, that this village was situated near the Shab, and not far from Alac. He then asked if I was a nakib of the imaum's cavalry?

"I am," I replied, without hesitation; "but I am astonished that you could have guessed it, considering my present plight after the last night's storm. Praised be the Prophet, it is passed."

"And have you overtaken those of whom you were in pursuit?" he asked, while several men came from their doors and narrowly observed me.

His question gave me a shock, and I replied, that having "just come from Aden, where I had been on a mission to the unsainted Faringis, I knew not to what he referred."

"God is great!" said he, lifting up his hands; "but is it possible that thou livest, and art in ignorance of what occurred at Hesn-al-Mouhabib lately? Two of those accursed Kafirs came from that polluted place called Aden to the footstool of our holy imaum, the lord of all Arabia; and aided by a talisman that cast a cloud before the eyes of Osman Oglou, the chief eunuch, gained admittance to the sacred Rose Garden of the seraglio, profaned by their hands the person of Solyman, and bore away the beautiful slave whom our sultan—he who rules the world as it has never been ruled since the days of Jengiz Khan—received from Sheikh Ibrahim, and now they have fled towards Aden, leaving Hesn-al-Mouhabib,

the eighth wonder of the world, a pile of flaming ruins. But they cannot escape, for the sacred banner of Sana has been displayed and the great gong beaten! Everywhere the Yemenees are roused, and Ali Badr—thou knowest him?"

"Mahmoud Ali! I know him well; hooknosed, blackbearded, and tall: well?"

"He, with black Osman and a troop of soldiers passed through our village not an hour since, in pursuit of them."

I was thunderstruck by the tidings of this garrulous Arab! That our pursuers should have passed us on the stony mountains appeared almost incredible; yet the intelligence was too circumstantial to be doubted. My heart sank at the idea of the so-called *sacred banner* having been displayed. The palladium of Sana, it was composed of a piece of Mohammed's shirt, with a fragment of the curtain that hung before the chamber of his best-beloved wife Kadijah, and locks of their hair were said to be woven among its embroidery. It was most religiously guarded, and kept in the seraglio of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, from whence it was never taken but on the most pressing emergencies of war; for under it Khassim the Great had conquered Yemen, and when displayed, every Mussulman was bound, under the pains of hell, to rally round it!

When this infernal standard was unfurled our escape seemed hopeless, and I sat on horseback, gazing at my informant, pale, weary, and irresolute as to what my next proceeding should be, while my hands wandered about my holsters, and the dark-visaged villagers crowded round, with wild and inquiring looks, that were not very encouraging.

"He is very like a Faringi of Aden," said one.

"So is the Vizier Rabd-al-Hoosi," said I, sharply, "and yet, Bismillah! there is no truer son of Islam."

The information just given made me anxious to return to those I had left; but how to convey to them food from a place where none was sold, I knew not. However, as the danger of loitering was apparent, I turned to the old dyer.

"What is your name, my friend?" I asked, firmly.

"Hassan Ali Ibn Baba," he replied, evidently impressed by my pretending to make a note of it, in my soaked memorandum-book.

"You are certain that Ali Badr passed through here within an hour?"

"Certain, as that my head, which is at your service, O nakib, is now upon my shoulders. He had eighteen horsemen, and ten dromedaries with shuternauls on their saddles."

"Then I must turn back and endeavour to overtake them without a moment's delay."

"Will the nakib not dismount and partake of the breakfast which my wife is preparing?"

"I thank you, good Hassan Ali," I replied; "but that is impossible. Yet, as I am faint and sick, if you will bring me a flask of

wine and a loaf, I will pay you well, and the vizier shall hear of it when cloaks are required for the royal household."

Hassan Ali placed his hands upon his head, in token of obedience, entered his cottage, and almost immediately returned with the loaf required; but the bottle of wine was not so easily procured in a place where its use was forbidden, and men were consequently unwilling to acknowledge that they possessed it. However, a flask was brought and paid for. I secured it, with the loaf, in the ample pockets of my benish, and turning my horse's head, with an Arabian salutation to the people, trotted out of the village, dipped into the thickets, and took my way to the grove where I had left Cecil and Fred Langley.

A terrible suspicion flashed upon my mind that I might find them both gone just as Fred had missed Amina. This made me spur on my poor horse till the blood dropped from his flanks; nor was I assured till, on giving a loud halloo, I heard Langley's faint rejoinder from among the shady palms, on the broad leaves and jointed stems of which the morning beams were glistening.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE KHANJA.

To my joy I found that Cecil had fallen asleep, being quite overcome by her fatigue and the late occurrences. Fred had lighted a fire, and partially dried her upper garments; but my information, and the imminent danger of our situation, made him immediately extinguish it.

The sound of my voice awoke Cecil, and kneeling down by her side, I tenderly raised her head. A slice of bread soaked in wine formed a repast for each of us, and, imitating the Arabs, I gave each of our horses the same, and then we looked narrowly at curb chain and saddle girth, for we had yet far and fast to ride, and the waters of a swollen river rolled between us and Aden. Langley was very low in spirit, and when I begged him to take courage, and believe that, through the influence and power of her brother Mohamed the emir, we would yet recover Amina, he shook his head sadly, and said,—

"To leave you here would be dangerous to myself and unjust to you; thus I will accompany you so far as the first tower of the Turkish wall at Aden—but not one step further. Then I will return to Sana, and even to the Castle of the Graces, in search of the poor girl I have lost. Come, let us be moving, if Miss Marchmont feels sufficiently refreshed; for we are in a dangerous vicinity, and the sun is yet far from its meridian. But let us take another glance at the pocket-map, and be sure of the direction we pursue."

Our clothes were now nearly dry; the wine and bread had refreshed

us, and Cecil was greatly revived by our halt. Mounting, we departed about eight in the morning, and riding at an easy pace, made a detour to avoid the village which was so near us, and through which the foe had passed so recently.

The sun soared into the blue and cloudless sky; the day became gradually and intensely hot. The silver vapour which (during the first hours of the morning) was exhaled from wood and valley, disappeared, and the whole landscape around us seemed to palpitate and tremble under the clear hot splendour of the day. We now rode rapidly in that direction which we thought should bring us to the Shab; for, being on its left bank, we had to re-enter the kingdom of Yemen before we could reach the British settlement. Through fertile plains, where the sugar-cane, the cotton-tree, and the senna-plant grew in wild luxuriance, through groves where the golden-orange, the acid critron, and brown pomegranate wove their varied foliage together; over tracts of yellow sand bordered by mountains of brilliant green, or by black scorched rocks of columnar basalt, we rode on, and hailed with pleasure the high meridian, when, without having seen a vestige of the foe, we cantered for rest and shelter towards a pile of ruins, that stood upon the shoulder of a hill before us, overlooking a beautiful wadi which extended to the east and west.

Adapted to the windings of the rocks, which were rent by many a gaping chasm and rugged rift, walls of mud and stones overgrown by creepers and wild grass, surrounded the steep, and were the remains of some old Turkish strength, formed, perhaps, by the viceroys, as a bulwark against the khalifs of Hadramaut. Within this mud rampart were four ruined towers, disfigured by many a rent and gap. To these ruins an archway, opening to a narrow path, gave admittance. We rode in, and dismounted among the long rank grass that grew within the walls, where the serpents were hissing and the owl and eagle screaming, as we roused them from their lairs and nests. Off the court-yard there opened a number of shady arches, and around their mouths the wild figs and vines hung in long thick wavy screens. Into one of these recesses we led our horses, and removing their saddles, groomed them with the utmost care. Within the ruins flowed a fine well—the greatest of all luxuries in such a climate—and after procuring some water in the broad leaves of a wild plant, we all reclined among the long cool grass of the vault to rest ourselves for the longer journey which was yet before us.

I placed my cheek to Cecil's brow, and finding it hot and feverish, brought her more of the limpid water, and laved her pallid face and thin white hands; then we sat long in silence, for lassitude and deep thoughts were upon us. Poor Langley, who had not closed an eye since—I know not when—fell into a heavy but dreamy sleep. Cecil rested her head upon my shoulder, and also slept, for my arm was around her, and she felt secure—perhaps even happy.

I had placed her in the coolest corner of the ruined vault, and

tenderly adjusted her torn dress over her. She opened her eyes for a moment, and smiling, drew my face towards her and kissed me; then she closed them, and as she resigned herself to sleep, somewhat of the former placid softness stole over her wan and wasted features. Supporting her, I gazed upon them as she slept—gazed upon her as a mother gazes on her first-born infant in its soft and innocent sleep.

Our horses stood close by, looking at us from time to time, with their fine eyes shining and their nostrils quivering with that hot Arabian blood which is so famous in the annals of the stud. The vault we occupied was so cool and delightful that it was with the utmost difficulty I resisted an inclination to sleep; but I thanked heaven that Cecil was slumbering, for I knew how much her slender energies required repose, and I passed the time in contemplating her pale wan face, with its closed eyes and dark tresses—that dear soft face, every feature of which reminded me of other, of happier, and of younger days.

Visible through the thick natural screen of green leaves which hung before the bare and shattered vault, I could see the arched entrance of this old castle of the Turkish times, and far beyond it, mellowed in the haze, the sunny landscape we had yet to traverse before we reached the banks of the long-wished-for river.

For nearly two hours my companions continued to sleep, though many a convulsive start and half-muttered exclamation evinced that in their dreams the dangers we had passed, and those yet to come, were floating before them. I believe I was just about to sleep too, for the abandonment, the cool repose, the secrecy and perfect solitude of the place, as contrasted with the burning heat without, were delicious and alluring; my eyes were gradually closing, and unconsciousness was stealing over me, when I experienced something like an electric shock, on perceiving the sudden apparition of an Arab, mounted on a fine dromedary, with all his weapons sparkling in the sun, appear at the gateway of the ruin, where he was almost immediately joined by a second, and then by a third and fourth, all similarly accoutred and mounted.

They were all clad in chain shirts, with shields, swords, matchlocks and spears, and their animals were brilliantly caparisoned with tasselled harness. Two of these new-comers wore red turbans; one had a white head-dress of ample dimensions, though his face was black as ebony, for he was no other than Osman Oglou, captain of the eunuchs.

In the fourth, by his swarthy visage, tippet of mail, and steel cap surmounted by a bird of paradise plume, I recognised Mahmood Ali Badr, captain of the imaum's horse guard. We were beset!

The slightest sound might betray us, and I expected to see them examine the grass for the usual indications of horses' hoofs, but they conversed quietly together, and looked repeatedly out of the archway into the plain or valley before it. They then rode into the

centre of the grass-grown court, and dismounting in the shade, seated themselves on the sward, and proceeded to light their pipes, within twenty feet of the place where I was breathlessly watching them, and where my unconscious companions slept.

"It is said the Ghoule Biaban haunts these ruins," said Osman Oglou.

"I hope those sons of burnt fathers, who yet loiter on the mountains, know that this is our muster place," said Ali Badr; "it is time they were all come in—wallah! but I will not lay the bastinado lightly on the *last* who pickets his horse beside us."

"There cannot be a doubt," said another, "it was one of those Kafirs who bought the bread and wine from Hassan Ali the dyer.

"Ass that he was to throw dirt on his beard and bring the bastinado on his feet by such an admission!" said Ali Badr, with a laugh. "We have ridden far and swiftly as yet, and to no purpose; but, wallah! and by the soul of the Prophet, if ever I have the fortune to come within arm's length of those sacrilegious Franks, they shall weep in tears of blood that black night's work at Hesn-al-Mouhabib!"

Mahmoud said this with the most ferocious energy, and as he spoke a malicious brightness was kindled in the eyes of Osman Oglou, who added—

"May their fathers' graves be defiled! But we will soon overtake them, unless they have crossed the river, which may God avert!"

By this time I had roused Cecil and Fred, and made them aware of our imminent danger. He was perfectly cool and collected; but when poor Cecil saw Osman Oglou, whose dreadful face reminded her of her past misery and captivity, her whole features became convulsed by a terror which froze her energies.

"As yet there are only four," said I; "but as this is their muster-place, the whole troop will soon be here, so action—instant action alone can save us."

"I could pick off the whole four by my revolver, like a covey of partridges, now, just as they sit," said Fred, with grim deliberation; "but that would be something very like assassinating them. Come, then, let us saddle the horses, and trust to their heels."

"But to our own heads and hands, in the first place," I whispered, while drawing the girths tight, and scarcely knowing what was to be done; for my reader may easily imagine how I dreaded to expose Cecil to fresh terrors.

"Fred," said I, "we must sally out, sword in hand, and cut our way through them."

"But if there are more outside, which is very probable, what then?"

"Trust to our swords and to Providence," said I.

"We will be fired on," he observed, "for they have shuternauls at their saddles."

"And Cecil!—to expose her to the peril of shot."

"Do not be alarmed for her," said Fred, "and cease to be alarmed for yourself, Miss Marchmont. *Your* life is of too much consequence to the imam, the protector of the world—the d—ned old bear!—to be lightly risked; thus, perhaps, not one bullet will be fired."

"You are right, Fred," said I, in a joyous whisper, "I did not think of that before; thank you, thank you for the idea."

"Come, let us mount; the arch is high enough. We must make a bold dash for liberty."

I besought Cecil to take courage, for now all depended upon that.

"Oh! take pity on me, Frank," said she, imploringly, "and forgive my timidity, for I feel as if about to die. If you knew all the horror Black Osman's face has summoned up within me—"

"By Heaven, I will send a pistol shot through it!" I replied, with fiery bitterness.

"I feel, dear, dear Frank, like one struck by palsy—I have neither thought nor feeling."

I placed a hand upon her heart; it had almost ceased to beat, and her sweet, sad face became livid; but suddenly she raised her head, and suppressing, or shaking off her terror, as she gathered fortitude from desperation, and from her fear for me, perhaps, rather than for herself, she grasped her reins, and working her horse up in hand a little, to be ready for the start, said,—

"Now, Frank, lead on, I am ready."

I took her horse by the bridle, and with a pistol in my own bridle hand, and my sword in my teeth, prepared to dash out of the vault at full speed by spurring and checking my horse. Fred did the same; and then tearing aside the foliage-screen with one hand, I gave Cecil's horse a smart stroke on the flank with the blade of my sword, on which it bounded out of the vault and across the grass-grown court like an arrow. Half a horse's length behind, we followed her at full gallop; and, partly in a spirit of bravado and partly revenge, I discharged my pistol full among the four Moslems, and then brandishing aloft its smoking barrel, uttered a reckless hurrah as we swept on through the archway and down the path from the ruins into the plain below.

"Allah Ackbar! to horse—to arms, O Mahmoud!" cried Black Osman, on seeing us.

"The Kafirs—the unblest Kafirs, by the Holy Kaaba!" cried the others, as they rushed to their cattle.

It was now evident that nothing but hard riding would save us, and where lay the Shab? The sun was in the western quarter of the sky, the shadows of the hills and trees were lengthening; in all the far extent of the level vale which stretched away towards the east, I could perceive no trace of armed men, and we rode furiously on without exchanging a word or drawing a bridle, while the shrill cries of the two Arabs and the eunuchs, who were now mounted and galloping after us, were swept past on the soft west wind.

Suddenly we heard two loud reports, and a ball hissed close by me. I looked back and perceived that two, who had far outstripped their companions, had dismounted from their dromedaries, which were kneeling down with their heads bent low, while their masters levelled at us their shaternauls, or swivel-guns, which were screwed to the back of their saddles. We were far beyond pistol-range; but as those arquebusses throw a much larger ball than a musket, they kill at a greater distance. Thrice Mahmoud Ali Badr and his two soldiers dismounted; thrice their living gun-carriages kneeled down, while their shaternauls were loaded, levelled, and fired; but happily the balls fell wide of their mark; and as much time was lost by this diminutive cannonading, we soon placed a great distance between us and the foe. No pause, however, was made by the fierce and vindictive Osman Oglou, who, cimeter in hand, with his lance and buckler slung by his side, rode carefully, surely, and not overswiftly on, following us with savage coolness and deliberation; for he was resolved to husband the strength of his dromedary, and I was well aware that ultimately our horses would fail first, as their powers of activity and endurance were far inferior to those of the ship-of-the-desert, as the Arabs name those uncouth animals.

The valley widened out into a spacious and uncultivated plain, bordered in the distance by green hills, and here and there, at long intervals, were clumps of the soft acacia, and the date-palm with its thick and sombre foliage.

From one of these groves we heard the Arab *tecbir* ringing, and to our inexpressible confusion, saw a troop of about twenty horsemen, with turbans and uplifted spears, riding as the Arabs always ride, in a confused crowd, but spurring on like the wind to intercept us.

"On—on," cried I; "there is yet hope that we may give these scoundrels the go-by in gallant style."

"If our horses hold out," added Fred; and it was my principal fear that they would fail; for I had now seen that Cecil was an expert and daring horsewoman, and was under no apprehension of *her* sinking, save from excessive fatigue. We passed these new pursuers, who, after firing a pistol-shot or two, joined Ali Badr, and they all pushed on together; but still they were far behind the indefatigable Osman Oglou, whose long-legged dromedary, with its feet thrown well out, and its nose in the air, came gliding noiselessly and close behind us, like a shadow.

The horsemen evidently belonged to Ali Badr's troop of the imaum's regular forces, for they were armed with long lances, sabres, pistols, and curved daggers; they were dressed according to fancy, but all had boots drawn over their bare legs, and wore turbans, the ends of which drooped on their shoulders. They rode the magnificent horses of Sana, which are esteemed among the best in Arabia. We had passed them all; but still Osman stuck, like a black leech, to our skirts, and now Ali Badr was close behind him.

"This is intolerable!" said I, wheeling round my horse, and

drawing a second pistol from my holster; "if this fellow comes close enough to fire his shuternaul, one of us must go down."

"I levelled and fired; but he threw himself flat on the dromedary's back; the ball whistled harmlessly over his head, and he uttered a shout of triumph as he came on again, while I was obliged to turn and spur on without having time to reload.

"The Shab—the river! here it rolls right in front of us," cried Fred.

And suddenly, between an opening in the thick brushwood, sugar-canes, withered dhourra, and occasional date-palms, I perceived the broad expanse of the stream, flooded by the last night's rain, and swollen by a thousand tributary runnels, rolling in foam towards the east. Our jaded and sinking horses could never swim it; there was no bridge, for the country was all a wilderness, and despair began to seize me—for now we had death before and death behind us. Believing our escape to be impossible, the Arabs rode more leisurely, all, at least, save Osman and Ali Badr, with a third, who were almost within musket-shot of us, when we drew up our horses on the river's margin, and gazed on each other with pale and inquiring faces. Cecil uttered a faint cry as her horse sank under her, lolled out its tongue, and turned back its bloodshot eyes.

The animal was dying!

Fred's ready arm adroitly caught her by the waist as the horse fell, and our tender charge was thus saved from some dreadful accident. I had reloaded my pistols, my mind was full of rage and bitterness, with sorrow and compassion for Cecil; for I anticipated that we would be cruelly slaughtered before her face, while she would be reserved for worse than a speedy death. A sickness came over my heart.

"Dead beat!" groaned Langley, grasping his revolver; "dead beat, and they are coming up at a hard trot!"

"Ah, if we could but reach yonder boat!" exclaimed Cecil, in the accents of despair.

"Boat! my beloved Cecil—where?" I asked.

"Among the sugar-canes; do you not see its mast?"

"I do—I do. This way, Fred; it is a *khanja*; we are saved—we are saved!" I exclaimed, as I lifted Cecil to my saddle, and forced my floundering horse through the high reeds and matted jowlies towards a place where the low mast rose above them, with a little red streamer on its summit. It proved to be a *khanja*—one of the ordinary vessels of the trading Arabs on the coast, and was merely a large boat, without any deck, save at the bow, where there is usually a small covered place, lighted at one side; the cordage was composed of palm-tree rope, and the sails of coarsely-woven matting.

Reining in his horse, and flinging its bridle to me, Fred rushed to the waist-belt among the soft slime and the jowlies, and grasping the warp, drew the *khanja* close in shore, and placed Cecil on board.

This done, he had scarcely time to spring into his saddle, when our headmost pursuers, Ali Badr, Black Osman, and two of their comrades, were upon us, with brandished lances and levelled pistols. We were but two to four, and we were worn and faint, whereas they and their much-enduring dromedaries were comparatively fresh; and anything they lacked in strength they made up amply in rage and abuse. Moreover, all their weapons were as sharp as razors, and of that unrivalled temper Damascus steel alone possesses.

I remember a major of the Turkish artillery telling me that once, during a review lately in the valley of Khassim Pasha (near Constantinople), he had seen Fatima, the female Colonel of the Bashi Bozouks, ride at full gallop past a silver crown-piece, and cut it in two, as it lay on the ground, by *one* blow of her Damascus cimitar—but to resume.

Two or three pistol-shots flew harmlessly past me, and at the same moment the four barrels of Fred's revolver rid us of two of the assailants, who fell severely wounded; but then the chief of the eunuchs and captain of horse charged us with their heads stooped, their shields upon their breasts, and their long lances levelled before them.

The rest of their troop were then about a mile distant.

"Allah is gracious! Thanks be to him we have got them all at last!" cried the gallant Ali Badr, as Fred engaged him hand to hand without delay, after cutting his lance in two by one fortunate blow. Osman Oglou then charged me. Avoiding the thrust by swerving round my horse, I arrested the passing shaft by my bridle hand, and dealt him a furious and backhanded blow on the head; but my sword, though a heavy one, turned on the tempered links of a steel chain, which was twisted in the folds of his white cotton turban. Again and again I repeated the blow, while the powerful black eunuch strove frantically to tear away his spear; and side by side my snorting horse and his grunting dromedary splashed and swayed through the mud and the long green jowlies.

"Dog, and son of an unblest dog, may thy father burn! I spit upon thy beard!" cried the infuriated eunuch, the appendages of whose mouth resembled the whiskers of a cat; "and if I do not slay thee, may I never draw sword or breath again!"

At these words we parted for a moment, as he relinquished the spear and drew his sword; and at that terrible crisis I heard the cries of Cecil rising faintly above the clashing of the swords and splashing of our animals among the weeds and slimy water; for she saw the rest of the troop advancing, and it was evident that unless we could rid ourselves of our present assailants instantly, we should be overborne and taken, or slain.

I fought blindly and despairingly, raining blow after blow at the more wary eunuch, who was skilfully husbanding his great strength. My whole soul seemed to be in my head—every impulse of life had rushed from my heart to my brain; I was giddy with the tumult of

dreadful thoughts that beset me—giddy with terror for Cecil; and I mentally vowed that dearly—dearly, indeed—should these slaves of Solymán pay for their victory. That inherent love of blood and slaughter which is a part of the eastern nature, made the aspect of Osman and Badr frightfully menacing and ferocious. Their curled upper lips showed their white teeth; their bloodshot eyes protruded and glared like those of a strangling dog; their countenances—one black, the other brown—became livid as, with all the fury of unflinching bravery, and the courage that numbers and religious rancour always give even to cowards, they pressed on us; but there was not one drop of coward's blood in their fierce and gallant hearts.

I had exchanged some nine or ten blows with Osman, and given him one severe cut across his nose (which was already flat enough) when he made the deadly but favourite thrust of the Arabs, at the pit of my stomach, with his short, crooked sword; again I caught his weapon, but this time by the hilt, and turning the point of my blade, made a lunge at his throat; but he threw his body aside, thus my sword was driven through his right arm, and I hurled him headlong from his dromedary among the jowlies, and then rushed to free Fred from Ali Badr, whose keen Damascus sabre had cut through his military regulation sword and left him quite at his mercy. They had grappled with each other, and were struggling for life and death.

Fred had grasped the Arab firmly by the sword-arm and his sacred beard, while the Arab had seized him in turn by the throat, and vainly strove to pierce him with his short and sharp-edged sabre; but just at the moment I approached, Langley snatched from Badr's silk girdle one of his long-barrelled Turkish pistols, and dealing him three tremendous blows upon the face and head with its heavy brass butt, threw him prone and senseless among the sedges.

"Let us haul in the khanja, cut the rope, and be off!" cried I; but the active Langley had again quitted the saddle, and was already in the water hauling in the little vessel. We clambered on hoard; I slashed through the painter, which was of tough palm-tree rope, by repeated blows of my sword, and aided by its oars we shot the little vessel out into the stream, just as the sun set behind the mountains of Alac, and just as the whole band of Arabs—some on horseback and others on dromedaries—all armed with lances, swords, matchlocks, and skuternauls, came furiously down to the sedge bank of jowlies and gave us a farewell volley of balls and abuse.

Long before this, overcome by her horror of the combat on the river's bank, my unhappy Cecil had fainted, and lay at the bottom of the khanja perfectly inanimate and unconscious of everything.

"Hurrah!" cried I—"out sweeps, Fred!—we shall soon be clear of Hadramaut!"

We pulled vigorously, and shot after shot swept over us, while the light khanja was borne down the flooded stream like a straw or a reed.

CHAPTER LXII.

AN ARAB LOVER.

IN spite of her tears and entreaties, her cries and threats, the gay horseman who had carried off Amina, rode at a speed which soon left the flaming summit of Hesn-al-Mouhabib behind in the obscurity of night. He spurred for nearly ten miles without drawing his bridle, and during the whole of that time Amina wept and complained. At last he halted, and dismounting with great grace and agility, lifted her off, placed her on a grassy bank, picqueted his horse to the truncheon of his spear, which he stuck in the turf, and then seated himself beside her. The pale face of the moon rested on the ridge of a hill; the stars were bright, and the sky clear; and Amina could see around her distinctly to a great distance; but the whole place seemed a perfect solitude. There was no help nigh, and when reflecting for the thousandth time upon what the emotions of Langley would be, when he came to Khassim's tomb and found her *gone*, she burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping.

The spot where they sat was beautiful; the delicate coffee-tree grew under the shade of the sturdy walnut and spreading lime, and the snow-white flowers and expanding berries of the cotton plant grew among the banks of rock which teemed with fragrant wilk flowers.

The young horseman was very handsome, and in his air and aspect reminded Amina much of that dear brother, Mohamed, for whom she treasured in her heart a love that had something filial in it. His features were regular, noble, and strongly marked by the dark hue of his eyebrows, moustachios, and eyes; his skin was of a rich transparent yellow colour, and through it the blood flushed at times in crimson tints, but being embrowned by exposure, he was like a beautiful statue of the palest bronze when the sun shines on it. His arms, steel cap, and shirt-of-mail, his Damascus sword, his Turkish pistols, dagger, horn, and accoutrements were of the finest workmanship. His manner was very winning, and he left nothing unsaid to soothe the fears and grief of Amina, and artfully urged, from time to time, the passion with which her youth and beauty had inspired him, and which her unfriended position had encouraged him to pursue.

"Ah, unhappy me!" she exclaimed; "first I was stolen from my dear brother's home by the followers of a barbarian——"

"And this barbarian—who was he?" asked the horseman.

"A wretch, infamous alike for his cruelty and his crimes, and hideous as the Ghoule Biaban!"

"Tell me who is the man, and by the Prophet's head, I will lay his at your feet before another moon comes round."

"Ahmed, the Sultan of Shugra."

The Arab uttered a loud laugh, which shook all the rings of his mail shirt.

"My beautiful, my beloved one! and so thou art the sister of Mohamed-al-Raschid?" said he, taking Amina's hand in his. "Do not be alarmed when I tell you that *I* am Ahmed of Shugra, the sultan of all the Futhalis."

"Thou—thou?" said poor Amina, recoiling in terror, "oh, it is impossible, for Ahmed is said to be frightful and ferocious as Solyman of Sana."

"I am, indeed, the Sultan Ahmed. Would I were a slave if I found more favour in those beautiful eyes. I heard much of thy beauty, Amina, yet until I saw thee had no more idea of its lustre than the poor Faringis of Aden had of the sun till they landed in Arabia. I laid a little plan to bear thee off, but the men to whom I entrusted it marred it all, and thou wert sold—sold to a Kafir! But the wretches are dead, so I need not heap dust on their beards. May thy favour increase, Amina! Why should my face seem black before thee? Mohamed and his wild Abdali have ruined Shugra, nor left my aged mother a roof wherewith to shelter her; I vowed to have sure vengeance, yet will I forgive both him and them, if thou wilt say, 'Ahmed, I love thee.'"

"Ahmed would not have me tell a lie," said Amina, "my heart is in the breast of another."

"Mohamed's hands are red with the blood of my people—he has carried off our young maidens, and cut the throats of our old men."

"Alas, alas!—for what?"

"The loss of thee. But it was *their* destiny, and what earthly power could avert it? It is *mine* to love thee, and *thine* to be my bride, Amina. I have only known thee an hour, and already my whole heart worships thee."

He attempted to place an arm round her, but Amina eluded him.

"Shall I ride after the Bedouins, and restore thee to them," he asked, with a smile, "or whether will you remain with me?"

"Of the two evils, I would rather remain with thee," sobbed Amina, whose heart was swollen with grief at her apparently hopeless separation from us; for she knew well, that to avoid ruin and death, if we escaped from Hesn-al-Mouhabib, we would have to seek Aden without delay, and of the distance and locality of that place—having never been beyond the vale of Jebel Ahmer—she had a very vague idea.

"Beneath the light of thine eyes my heart is melted," continued Ahmed, in the style of Oriental hyperbole so natural to the Arabs; "it has become a part of thine; love me, dearest Amina, and never again will I shoot shaft or shot against the Abdali of Mohamed—neither will I lift sword or spear against them. I will be their firm friend in peace, and the foe of their foes in war! and all **this** I swear, by the soul and seal of Solyman Ibn Daood."

"Remember, O sultan, that I love another, and that to him my faith is pledged," said Amina, despairingly.

"And who is this other? asked Ahmed, haughtily and gloomily, while his eyes gleamed and his cheek flushed.

Amina trembled, but did not reply.

"Speak—answer me," said he, grasping her slender wrist.

"A gentleman of Frangistan," she replied, timidly, and with something of shame for the avowal; "a brave soldier of Aden, who saved me from disgrace, and would—but for thee, perhaps—have restored me to my people."

The Arab stood for a moment, silent and confounded.

"A Kafir—a Faringi!" said he, with scorn in his tone and anger in his air; "doth not the blessed Koran say to the faithful, '*kill them*, wherever you find them, and turn them out of that whereof they have dispossessed you;' sword of Ali! and a Kafir would dispossess me of thee? No, no, Amina—an eagle mates with an eagle, and not with a common hen; thus, a true believer weds a true believer. Let the abhorred of the Prophet wed one who is equally abhorred, that they may tremble together when the 'trumpet of consternation' rends yonder mountains with its blast; and that together they may drink boiling-water in the pit of Hell, as the sixth chapter of the Koran tells us. A Kafir! and wouldst love a poor Kafir, from the land where the sun never shines, where there is no food but fish, and whose kings live in a *khanja*?" added Ahmed, with a loud laugh that savoured more of real amusement than anger; "Wallah! my dear girl, either this is the wickedness of Eblis, or it is mere insanity, and must be thought of no more, for now Ahmed of the Futhalis lays his heart and his spear before thee."

"Oh! what will my dear friend think when he finds that I am irrecoverably lost?"

"Let him think what he pleases, the accursed Kafir! I would that all such were swept from the earth into their last home in the Well of Borhût."

"He will think I have deserted him!" said Amina, wringing her hands and weeping, as her lively imagination drew a true and vivid picture of poor Fred's sorrow and perplexity at the tomb of the Imam Khassim.

"It is now midnight," said the roving prince, as he consulted the stars; "the dew is falling like winter rain, and dost thou mean to weep on thus till morning? Will tears, even if thou sheddest as many as the tribe of Ad, bring thee nearer to this unbeliever, or him nearer to thee? or will they wash thine image from my heart? No—they will not; so it would be wiser by far, my beautiful Amina, to creep under this mantle which I will hang as a canopy from the branch of a tree, and share with me this warm barracan, and my ample benish; the fur of one and the folds of the other will be more than a tent for us both, and thus protected we may sweetly sleep

till morning. Come, dearest Amina, come, for thou art the star of Ahmed's soul."

But Amina only shrunk back, and her tears fell the faster.

"Amina, I know that thy brother Mohamed is the idol and pride of thy heart—thy star of stars! for he hath been father, mother, and brother to thee, all in one; and to him will I restore thee, if thou wilt only love me—and in this I ask but little from one who loves a Kafir!" he added, bitterly; but still Amina only wept.

The Sultan of the Futhalis said everything that the ample and forcible language of his country supplied, to illustrate the strength of his sudden and absurd passion; he made the most splendid promises, and to fulfil them, vowed that he would sack the great Bezes-tien of Sana and the bazaars of Mocha; but Amina only answered by her tears, and seeing at last that nothing was to be made of her, and that he could not commit himself to sleep while she mourned and wept, the princely Arab threw over her his rich warm benish, and then struck a light with that apparatus which none of his people are ever without, prepared his chibouque, folded his legs under him, placed his back against a tree, and prepared for a long and quiet smoke, as a solace under past misfortunes and present disappointment.

In this primitive land of lawlessness and outrage, where, though all were free, the rights of common liberty were, curiously enough, but little understood, and where the life of an immortal being was valued infinitely less than that of a horse, it can excite no wonder that Amina, with all her gentleness, affectionate spirit, and occasional timidity, had imbibed somewhat of firmness and courage with that energy which, under certain circumstances, might have made her a heroine—if one so very small in stature, and so child-like in her beauty—could indeed become a heroine. Thus, while the amorous Ahmed sat under the broad leaves of a date palm, smoking, and regarding her with that expression of satisfaction which we generally bestow upon a new and pleasing purchase, present, or acquisition—such as a picture, a cabinet, or horse—Amina was revolving in her mind all the plans and modes of escape she could think of, and was not without a faint hope of being enabled to rejoin her beloved Faringi.

But the sleepless night passed away; the east began to brighten as the circle of the dawn spread over the whole sky, and a rosy tint succeeded the clear cold grey; the shadows of every shrub and tree fell far along the earth, and still she sat there with the benish hanging loosely over her shoulders; her pale cheek wet with tears, and her black tresses damp with dew; and now, after grooming his horse, preparatory to commencing his journey—Amina knew not where—the chief of the Futhalis turned to a fountain that flowed near them, for the purpose of performing those ablutions which are necessary before that morning prayer with which every good Mussulman begins the day.

To lave his beard, he removed his steel cap, with its little tippet or flap of mail, and placed it on the low and rough stone parapet which enclosed the fountain, and then as his evil geni—or Amina's better angel—directed, the head-piece, which was surmounted by a valuable diamond, the palladium of his house, fell, by some unaccountable chance, plashing into the water. Ahmed uttered an exclamation of impatience, and stooping over the little wall, repeatedly endeavoured to recover it, but without success, for the well was deep; yet he was determined to have back his head-piece, for the diamond was a talisman which his father had received from the powerful Imaum of Muscat—the same opulent prince who, not long since, presented a line-of-battle ship to the Queen of Great Britain.*

Now it seemed to Amina that her time was come!

Invoking the protection of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, she stole towards the horse of Ahmed, leaped into its soft velvet saddle, and wrenched away the spear to which it was picqueted. At that moment the horse uttered a neigh, and Amina a cry of mingled triumph and terror, as she urged the animal into a gallop.

"Wallah, my horse!" cried Ahmed, rushing to his matchlock; "thou ridest like the female guards of Java, but come back, or I will fire!"

But he immediately flung the weapon down, and ran after the fugitive, whistling and crying on his horse. The latter seemed somewhat inclined to obey its master's familiar voice, and was about to turn, when Amina, rendered desperate, drew a silver bodkin from her hair, and—while she grasped the great knob of the war saddle by her left hand—plunged it thrice into the glossy flank of the steed, which sprang away like an arrow, and left its breathless and bare-headed master, the sultan, far behind, minus both horse and head-piece.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE FIRE-WORSHIPPERS.

"**PERFIDIOUS** wretch!" thought Amina, "I have outwitted you, even as you outwitted those robber Bedouins, and I owe you neither thanks nor gratitude, for you were indeed the first bad cause of all my danger and misery.

The saddle of the horse was similar to those generally used by Turkish horsemen; it was covered with cloth and had in front a high crooked peak, furnished with a knob like the butt of a large pistol, profusely adorned with gold and silver work. Though an expert horsewoman, Amina rode on this saddle with great difficulty; but fear and hope added to her natural energy, and she kept the fine steed at a hand gallop for many miles in the direction from which

* The Imaum, of seventy-two guns.

she believed it had come overnight, and thus she expected every moment to see the blackened summit of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, or the gilded dome of Khassim's tomb appear before her, among the green orange and citron trees that clothed the whole landscape. But neither one nor the other appeared; the country gradually became desolate, the trees were left behind, and about noon she found herself in a bleak and open valley, surrounded by columnar masses of black basaltic rock, where the pale green gourds hung from their long pendants, and the castor-oil plant spread its tender leaves upon the sand. In some places the soil was torn by the brooks which had been swollen in the rains of the last winter; but no living thing was visible, save the little snakes that hissed through the grass, and the red-eyed monkeys that skipped from rock to tree. She paused and looked round her in fear, for she thought of the Ghoule Biaban—the Demon of the Waste—who was said to dwell in such places as this.

Dismounting, she led her horse into a little thicket of citrons, and lifting up her eyes, knelt down innocently to pray and to compose her thoughts. Hunger she felt none, and the fruits which the teeming earth supplied prevented her from feeling thirst. The sky was lowering and the atmosphere intensely close and sultry; thus, lassitude soon overpowered her, and at length sleep closed her eyes. The little green snakes crept through the grass and played with her fine black hair; the agile monkeys swung waggishly by their tails from the citron branches, and the great vultures of the adjacent mountains and of the yellow desert that lay far beyond them, hovered about her, as if they marvelled whether that tender creature was dead or only sleeping; but the sweet girl dreamed on and undisturbed until evening, when she started and awoke, to find that a sombre darkness was shrouding all the valley, that the shadows of the hills were growing black, that the wind with a murmuring sound shook the branches of the citrons, while the crescent of the moon glimmered with a fiery tint among the flying clouds.

On awaking to tears and terror, her faculties became absorbed in contemplating a long procession, consisting of many hundreds of squalid looking men and women, winding through this otherwise lonely valley, and encircling a rude stone which stood in the centre of it, but close to the grove where she lay, and which they were evidently about to use as an altar; for, to her horror, she perceived this was a pilgrimage of Guebres, or Fire-Worshippers—idolators who follow the strange creed of Zoroaster, and abhorring all Moslems, are by them abhorred and persecuted in turn.

Many of these pagans exist in Arabia, though by far the greater number will be found in our Indian possessions, under the name of Parsees, who in Bombay, Surat, and Barouch, on the western side of the Gulf of Cambay, are generally wealthy merchants and enterprising traders. All these Guebres are descended from the ancient Persians, who in 651 fled from the soldiers of the Khalif Omar, and

strange it is that, like the Jews, they still retain unchanged the blood, the colour, and the dark idolatry of their forefathers, the countrymen of Cyrus and Darius.

Their high priest still resides in Upper Armenia.

The horror all true believers have of these pagans is very great; thus, language cannot describe the emotions of poor Amina when she beheld the circle of the Guebres narrowing as they drew nearer and more near to the rude altar, which was close to her place of concealment. She was appalled, too, by the shouts of wild laughter, which they uttered simultaneously from time to time, in honour of Zoroaster, their prophet, the author of the Persian Magic, who is said to have laughed aloud the moment he came into the world, and who, moreover, brought them from Heaven *seven* books of laws, which taught the way to Paradise, *seven* which interpreted all dreams, and *seven* more which revealed the secrets of physic; but, unfortunately, these valuable productions were written in a language which no one knew, and the pagan Iskander burned fourteen of them.

"Alas!" thought Amina, while her tears again flowed fast, "I had better have remained with the young sultan, for now, my beloved Faringi, I will never see thee more—the Guebres will slay me."

Scarcely daring to breathe, she crept near her horse, as if its presence afforded her protection as well as company, and fearfully through the citron branches she gazed on the kneeling circle of idolaters, who were all adoring in silence the *sacred fire*, which had been brought, by the priest who presided, from the Great Altar, to which every Guebre must make a pilgrimage once in life, and which lay at a vast distance from Yemen, in the country of fire, where their chief temple stands, in the Persian province of Azerbaijan. This portion of the celestial light burned pale and blue in a tripod, while the priest placed it upon the stone altar, and long the Guebres continued to adore it in silence, which was broken only by those occasional shouts of wild laughter, which ran round the circle like a fire of musketry along a line. Then the priest, who was a very old man, with a snow-white beard that flowed before his shining girdle and which contrasted strongly with his sable robes, raised up his withered hands, and in the name of the God of Fire solemnly cursed his three greatest enemies—Iskander-al-Rumi, the son of Philip; Mohamed, the Camel-Driver of Mecca; and Schah Abbas, the great and cruel—for time makes no change in the hatred of the Guebres.

At this malediction Amina trembled, for as the priest concluded, the thunder rolled across the sky, and the gloom of the same storm which saved *us* from our pursuers was darkening fast the narrow vale of rocks, but as it lowered the celestial light of the Guebres seemed to blaze more brightly; and she remembered that the Koran—which, like the Bible of the Christians, those people treat with the utmost indignity—compared them and other idolaters to brutes, ordained that they should not be prayed for—that their worship is

unpardonable, that their couches would be made in Hell, and that over them would be curtains and coverlets of fire; and then she muffled her head in her veil and turban, that she might neither see the ghastly blue fire which flickered on the altar, nor hear the thunder, which she confidently believed it excited in Heaven; but still the clear, shrill voice of the grim and aged priest reached her, as he summoned from amid the hushed multitude a renegade, who was about to be strangled for having, for a time, and for selfish ends, embraced the religion of Islam; and, though she knew him not, this was no other than Mirza Kufa, the hotel keeper—the Parsee who had accompanied Fred and me from Aden, and who after being cast adrift by the Emir Mohamed, at Lahadj, had, unfortunately for himself, fallen among some of his old acquaintances and countrymen, the Guebres, who were now determined to punish his apostasy; and, urged by the powerful incentives of fear for herself and of curiosity, Amina looked once more.

The gloom of the sombre evening had increased, the hills were almost black, and fitfully the light of the altar played upon the white turbans, the yellow visages and squalid forms of the Guebres, whose circle had become still narrower, to hear the voice of the priest and sentence of the culprit, who lay prostrate on the earth.

"Unhappy being," said the priest, after seven prostrations, "thou wert reared in the pure principles of Zoroaster, and permitted to behold and to adore that sacred fire which is a part of the glorious sun, the most perfect and wonderful of all God's creations—the purest of elements—the realm of light, within whose hallowed sphere is Paradise; therefore those who now behold this flame see a portion of the eternal home of the holy and the good, the source of our present life and breath, and of the future reward of the faithful. Thou wert taught, O Mirza Kufa," continued the priest, in a tone of sorrowful upbraiding, "how Azer, the Frank—the sire of our wondrous prophet—journeyed from his own distant country to dwell in Babylon, where his wife became overspread by a celestial light, which blinded the eyes of many who beheld it, and made her seem unto others beautiful as a daughter of the sun; and thou wert taught how sage astrologers predicted that in due time there would be born a child, who would rend the diadem from the king's brow. Thereupon, he ordered all male children to be slain; but the wife of Azer escaped with her offspring—yet only for a time, for the king discovered them, and raised his sacrilegious sword to smite the holy infant, when, lo! his arm was withered up to the shoulder, even as the hot wind shrivels the grass of the desert. Then he ordered the babe to be thrown into a blazing furnace, which instantly became a bed of roses; but the wicked king was tormented by a huge fly, which gave him no peace by day or night, for it buzzed continually in his eyes and at his ears, until life became a burden to him, and he died in despair!

"All these wonders thou wert taught in youth, Mirza Kufa, and

didst believe in them; how the miraculous child grew to man's estate, and of the miracles he performed; how he bathed in baths of liquid silver, and was thence named *Zer Ateucht*, or the Silver-washed; and how he preached and prophesied, and how, on being received up into Paradise, he foretold a general resurrection, when fire should descend upon the earth, while the vast hills and shining minerals of the world shall be melted down to fill up the dark chaos of hell, and destroy the mansions of the genii and of the demons, and when the earth itself shall be made level—yea, as the great desert of Oman! All this thou didst believe, Mirza Kufa, yet thou didst fling from thee the faith of thy father, and rush into the arms of the sensual Moslemuna! Thou hast married within the third degree; thou hast eaten the flesh of hogs that were fed by others than Guebres; thou hast abstained from wine in public, and drunk it like a drunkard and hypocrite in private; thou hast cut thy hair and paired thy nails, and yet neglected to commit the cuttings of the first and the pairings of the second to the earth without the city. Thou hast eaten of forbidden meats, and broken the thirty holydays—all of which thou hast confessed to me; and under the heel of Mohamed the Camel-Driver thou hast extinguished for ever the celestial flame in thy household. These are grievous things, O Mirza Kufa; and unless thou canst find one among those here assembled to perish in thy place, thou must die before the altar of the sacred fire!"

Mirza Kufa, who had uttered deep groans during every pause in this curious harangue of the priest (who thus rapidly sketched the life and chief miracles of Zoroaster), now gave a convulsive sob as he grovelled on the earth, for he knew that he was utterly without hope, as in all that gathered multitude there was not one—even the most desperate or most poor—so tired of life as to yield it up to rescue, for a few years, a miserable apostate.

In all this there was something terrible!

The priest shook up the sacred fire, and the figures of its worshippers appeared like spectral shadows as they knelt around it. The dewy leaves of the citrons glittered like silver in its blue sepulchral flame; and the floating beard, wild eyes, and drapery of the priest were visible to Amina, as she gazed with a species of stupor on this dark and gloomy worship which appalled her. Hunger and thirst—for she had been suffering from both—were alike forgotten.

The priest, after seven more prostrations towards the east, as the quarter of the sun's appearance, and as many more towards the west as the quarter of its descent—prostrations in which he was imitated by all the multitude, whose fervour and passion became excited, and began to find vent in cries, now proceeded to bind up the eyes of Mirza Kufa with a fillet of white cotton, preparatory to putting him to death.

Every moment this excitement increased, and Amina, whom the

place, the unholy worship, and the dire preparations, completely appalled, covered her eyes with her veil, and resolved to look no more. For a time the groans, the laughter, and muttered prayers, continued, while the thunder rumbled at the horizon, and the hot sulphureous wind swept through the valley, with that low moaning sound which generally precedes a storm. Again Amina looked in the hope that all was over, and a half-stifled shriek burst from her; for now Mirza Kufa was writhing on the ground, and the priest was proceeding to draw the cord by which he was to be strangled. On hearing her cry he paused, and stretched forth one hand as if imposing silence; and then a stillness the most profound pervaded the whole multitude, for not a sound was heard but the tossing leaves as the wind swept through the citrons.

"The sacred fire has been polluted by the presence of a pagan—by one whose eyes should never have beheld it!" exclaimed the priest. "Search those trees, and drag forth the unbeliever whose cry has disturbed us."

"It is a victim sent in my place to appease thee, O Ephraim Zer Ateucht!" cried the half-strangled Parsee; "search, oh, search, and spare not! Find the lurker, and I will leave all I possess to the altar of Azerbaijan. Save me—pardon me! What more can I do? Save me, good people all! I kiss your feet—amaun! amaun!"

A crowd of Guebres rushed through the grove of citrons; the unhappy Amina was discovered in a moment, and roughly dragged into the circle, where, from mere inability to stand and from excess of terror, she sank on her knees before the stern and inflexible disciple of Zoroaster, whose keen eyes, in which there beamed no ray of human kindness, fascinated and bewildered her like those of a snake.

"It is a victim sent in my place," whined the Parsee; "Ephraim Zer Ateucht is merciful; he would not have Mirza Kufa to die."

"When he hath so much to leave to the holy temple of Azerbaijan," interrupted the priest. "It is well; leave all thou hast, O Mirza, to the guardians of the sacred fire, and then hope that, after being purified by cold and heat, thy soul, when required of thee, may in the end be happy. Go—thou art saved; for lo! a victim has come in thy place."

Almost before the priest had ceased, the Parsee had vanished among the crowd, exclaiming,—

"Now, by the soul of him who was born in Babylon, but this is a fortunate hour!"

"What art *thou*, maiden?" asked the priest; for this solemn and obsolete style is still used by the Orientals, as well as some of the western nations.

Amina made no reply, but sobbed convulsively.

"Quick, quick—answer," said the priest, drawing a jambea from his shining girdle which engirt his sable robe, "for the storm howls heavily."

"I am an Arab of the Arabs—the sister of Mohamed the Abdala,"

she replied, while Mirza Kufa gnashed his teeth with revenge and joy.

"A Moslemah!" said the priest.

"A true believer in the only Prophet of God—Mahomed resoul Allah!" exclaimed Amina, as she threw up her beautiful arms with a mingled emotion of rapture and despair, for she knew this avowal would destroy her.

A yell burst from the Guebres, who abhor the followers of the Prophet, who drove the last of their kings from the Land of Fire at the point of the sword; and in the most tumultuous manner they insisted upon her being immediately sacrificed. The priest waved his hand to impress silence, and again the most solemn stillness prevailed, while all the Guebres bowed their heads to listen.

"The eyes which have seen the sacred fire without believing in its divine source, must never again behold the glorious sun; so let this believer in the accursed creed of the Camel-Driver be buried alive, like the daughters of the tribe of Kendah, that the dust and the darkness of earth may cover her for ever."

This terrible sentence had no additional effect on Amina, for she had already reached that point or acme of terror where it passes to the other degree, and stolid apathy succeeds, as if all her senses were benumbed and dead. She muttered from time to time,

"Holy Fatima, sole daughter of the Prophet, protect me!"

But, alas for strong faith! there was no protection given.

Among the multitude present, there was not one who possessed a shovel; thus, many proceeded with their bare hands to tear up the turf and hollow out the earth. But the rescued Mirza Kufa discovered a deep fissure in the rocks close by, and proposed that she should be enclosed there—a suggestion which was at once adopted. The miserable and almost inanimate girl was slowly borne *seven* times round the altar, according to the sun's course, in a procession preceded by the priest bearing aloft his flaming tripod, and then they thrust her into the chasm, while the whole valley rang with the wild cries and seven successive bursts of laughter from the Guebres.

At that moment the storm, which had been so long threatening, burst forth, but not yet in all its fury. The green lightning gleamed at the end of the wadi, the palms tossed their huge leaves, like spirits waving their arms, in the wind; the hoarse thunder hurtled peal after peal across the blackened sky, and those large, warm drops which are everywhere the invariable precursors of a torrent of rain, plashed heavily on the flushed faces of the pagans and the waving leaves of the plantains and citrons; but owing to the chemical preparations of which it was cunningly composed, the wind blew and the rain fell on the sacred fire in vain.

Meanwhile more than a hundred ready hands were toiling to close up the chasm. Trees were wrenched away by the roots, turf was torn from one place, the earth brought and stones rent from another, thus speedily a mound of rubbish rose above that narrow aperture,

into which the Guebres had thrust Amina. Five minutes sufficed to accomplish this work; but it was barely over when a thunderbolt shot from the parted clouds, struck the summit of the basaltic rocks above the mound they had just formed, and splintered it. For a moment the shrinking Guebres saw each other's yellow visages, as the sacred fire was eclipsed; but with the darkness a mighty mass of rock, which the bolt had dislodged, descended into the valley and rolled across it, the noise of its descent mingling with the peal of the thunder. The tornado uprooted the strongest palms, shook the basaltic cliffs, and piled the drifted sand in the fissures of the mountains. The rain, which now descended into the dark and narrow vale like a second deluge, soon cooled the religious frenzy of the Fire-Worshippers, and they fled in every direction for shelter and for safety.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE SUNKEN ROCK.

WE kept the khanja as much as possible on the Yemen side of the Shab, to be beyond the reach of shot; there was little or no wind, and the sails of matting were so torn as to be useless, therefore our only plan was to let this clumsy craft drift down the stream, which was flooded like a mountain torrent by the contributions of a thousand little runnels. In some places it was red as blood from the effects of the recent storm; in others, it was so pellucid and clear, that in its deepest pools we could see, amid beds of scarlet rock, of golden sand and snow-white shells, the little fish shooting to and fro on their silver coloured fins.

The cool atmosphere of the river soon revived Cecil from her faint, and she rested with her head upon my knees. By this time Fred and I were pulling as men can only pull when life depends upon their exertions. Our speed was great, and our boat shot on like an arrow; but the soldiers of Ali Badr urged their swifter dromedaries along the sedge banks, and frequently got ahead of us. Or this they dismounted, made their cattle kneel, and fired their brass shuternauls, but being ill-directed, the balls fell either astern or into the opposite bank, and for more than three miles down the foam covered stream we held on our way untouched, at one time between banks of impending rock, at others, between groves of beautiful palms or sedges, where the jowlies, and wild sugar-cane were mingled together.

Meanwhile, clouds floated across the blue sky, and the cool breeze shook the sombre palms and light-leaved orange groves; the night became dark, and the moon's silver crescent, diminished almost to thread, lingered on the verge of the landscape, as we swept on towards the Indian Ocean—then nearly seventy great Arabian miles distant.

The grunting of the swift dromedaries, the shrill *teebir*, the "Allah Ackbar!" of their riders, the red blaze and sharp report of match-lock and shuternaul, as they followed us along the northern bank of the stream, were incessant; but either by the goodness of Providence or the badness of their aim the shot never yet came near us; and we were beginning to hope that we might tire them out—though we knew that dromedaries will sometimes travel for six days without rest—when, suddenly, there was a violent shock; the frail khanja parted in fragments beneath us, and I found myself struggling in the dark river, with one arm around Cecil and the other clinging to a fragment of the half-sunken rock, on which our boat had so fatally foundered.

Langley was swept past us, but caught some of the long tough jowlies, and gained the solid bank of the stream, from whence he called aloud—for he was only twelve yards off—to let Cecil cling to me, while I swam to the drooping sedges. "Quick," he added, "for the love of Heaven—they are not a pistol-shot from us, but we may conceal ourselves among the canes."

I did as he desired, and flung myself off by my feet, swimming hard against the stream, while my precious burden clung to me, and while, for further security, I grasped a fold of her dress in my teeth. Fortunately, I had not to swim far, and I caught the green jowlies just when every energy was departing out of my limbs, and I could not have struck another stroke, even for Cecil! The hope of concealment was vain, for Fred had scarcely pulled us out of the stream, when the Arabs were around us with brandished weapons, and my throat was grasped by the left hand of Osman Oglou, while the other placed the point of his sabre to my neck.

"O Cecil—my beloved Cecil!" said I, in despair, "spare her, in the name of your Prophet, spare her!"

"Thou speakest of the Prophet!" said Osman Oglou, with scorn; "a dog who has dishonoured the holy imaum, cast dirt upon his beard, and violated the sanctity of the seraglio."

"Dog," added Ali Badr, savagely smiting me on the mouth with the hilt of his sword, and covering me with blood; "call upon the false god of the Faringi, and see if he will save thee now!"

The sublime resignation of Cecil was far from my breast at that bitter moment, and my whole wish was to have a pair of loaded pistols at the service of these dark barbarians.

"May the white leprosy of Naaman be on thee," added Ali Badr, administering a similar blow to Langley, who was strongly grasped by several Arabs, "for thou hast given us a long and arduous ride; but, oh, knave of a Kafir, thou shalt rue in bitterness the deeds of that night of fire at Hesn-al-Mouhabib! A terrible punishment awaits you both, and all men shall hear of it, from Sana to Istamboul, for the sultan has sworn to become a drinker of blood—the blood of the Faringis; and I know that in cruelty he will surpass even Adoni Bezek, who cut the thumbs off seventy kings of Asia,

and who boiled children alive in cauldrons. Thus, all the **Kafirs** at Aden shall share in the punishment of your crimes."

"Mahmoud Ali Badr," said I, imploringly, as I pointed to Cecil, who had now sunk in a stupor on the bank, "you are a soldier, and may know compassion, when this base negro who grasps my throat, can know it not. Be kind to *her*, and may your house be ever prosperous in peace and valiant in war."

"She is the slave of the sultan's pleasure," replied Mahmoud, sulkily, "and thus we are all the slaves of her; so be assured she will meet with kindness. Well would it be for thee and thy comrade were you but half as safe from peril or the chief strangler's fingers."

"Should we not pick out their eyes, lest they escape?" said Osman, pricking his black paw with the point of the sword.

"Wallah, good advice, certainly," answered several of the Arabs, who were re-loading their matchlocks and pistols; "what sayest thou, Ali Badr? It will save us all further trouble and care."

"Captain Mahmoud," said I, while my heart sank at the terrible suggestion, "we have eaten bread and salt together—have you forgotten that?"

"Silence—Kafir—dog!" said Osman, shaking me furiously, "for thee it matters little; thy lamp will soon be out. Barek allah! *thy* star shall shine no more. But speak, nakib, shall we blind them?"

"Not until the sultan has seen them," replied Badr; "we must show them whole and well, if possible, that they may the better endure whatever it is his pleasure to inflict."

"Captain Mahmoud," said I, for I hoped that much might be won from the better feelings of this young Arab, "desire this ruffian to take his hand from my throat."

"Silence," cried Osman Oglou, with a terrible frown; "ruffian, indeed! thy mother was the mother of asses."

"Release him, Osman," said Ali Badr, "but let them be bound together by cords; place the slave in her chest, and, in the name of the Prophet, let us depart for the first of cities, where their blood shall soon sprinkle the market-place of the universe. Lead on to Sana!"

"So be it," growled Osman, sheathing his sword with undisguised reluctance; "bring cords and bind them, the misbegotten and the unblest; may their fathers' tombs be defiled and their homes be desolate; but old Yacoob, the diviner, was right; we undertook this expedition in a lucky hour."

"I would give a thousand guineas to be with this black scoundrel where none could separate us, and with only a good cane or a hunting-whip in my hand," said Fred, in a hoarse voice, as he wiped the blood from his lips; "it would be a glorious satisfaction to break every bone in his cowardly body."

The Arabs now stripped and robbed us of everything, even to our shirts and boots, leaving us only a wretched cummerbund. The sensibility conduced by civilization, and the natural repugnance to

appearing almost in a state of nudity, became somewhat lessened in a country where all the slaves and peasants wear only the turban and cummerbund, but I had great fear that the change might have a fatal effect upon Langley, whose frame was not so strongly formed or so hardy as mine. During this barbarous stripping, the Arabs discovered in his breast a locket containing a miniature of his mother and the hair of his sisters, and notwithstanding his most touching entreaties that they would leave him this trinket, his wishes were treated with contempt, and Black Osman, who believed it was a talisman, thrust him back with his foot and spat in his face.

The chest into which Cecil was placed was a covered seat, strapped upon the back of a camel, which our pursuers had brought for the especial purpose, as they had never believed for a moment we could escape them. In mute despair she stretched her hands to me, as the curtains were forcibly drawn around her by Osman's black eunuchs, who led the camel away, and my soul seemed to depart with its burden. Oh, how I trembled for her share in the escape from Hesn-al-Mouhabib; and for all she might yet endure before the death which I firmly believed awaited us all removed her from further pain.

Langley and I had our hands tied by cords, and these were secured to the girth of Black Osman's saddle, allowing us a space of about six feet apart. As soon as this was done, the cavalcade was put in motion, and the march began about midnight, a retrograde, and to us most dreadful march towards the city of Sana. Fred and I were forced to proceed on foot, while our escort were all mounted, and compelled us by spurring and dragging our ropes, by blows from shafts of lances, or, as in three instances, sharp pricks from the points of them, to keep up with the speed at which they rode; but exhausted as their cattle happily were, by the long and arduous pursuit, until after their first halt we found no great difficulty in walking fast enough to please even those petty but malevolent tyrants at whose caprice and mercy our evil fortune had placed us.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE PREDICTION OF HAURA.

NEXT day the hot unclouded sun came up in all his tropical splendour from the burning sands that lay beyond the hills of Saba; the warm wind of that desert tract floated through the valley of the Shab; the citron and orange groves shook their light foliage, and the heavy leaves of the solemn palm were lifted on their jointed stems; the monkeys (the tribe of Ad) skipped from rock to rock, and the brave eagle was soaring into the wide blue sky as we recommenced our melancholy march towards the capital of the imaum.

Our hearts were sad and downcast, and oppressed by mournful forebodings of the future.

Fatigue and defeat had nearly broken our spirit, and even hope was leaving us. Langley and I trod on side by side in silence. We endured great thirst, conduced by our past excitement and present toil, having to march so fast to keep up with Arabs well-mounted on swift horses and ambling dromedaries; but I suffered yet greater misery when I thought of all that was to be endured by Cecil. Pang succeeded pang, till reflection became one continued pain. I strove in vain to pierce the future, and believed that without doubt, as soon as we reached Sana, Fred's fate and mine were sealed, and that Cecil would be again consigned to that detestable seraglio, her prison.

The blows and goadings, the taunts and maledictions we received from our captors were incessant; and nothing saved us from more severe maltreatment but the presence of Mahmoud Ali Badr, who rode at the head of the troop, and looked round from time to time to repress the more unusual ebullitions of religious rancour. It was indeed a mercy that we were not left utterly to the care of Osman Oglou.

For many miles Langley and I marched on thus, bareheaded, unshaven, and denuded of clothing; we were silent, for each was full of his own bitter thoughts. Whether Fred was reflecting on the loss of Amina, on his friends at the regiment, on the happy and splendid English home, from which he was about to be cut off for ever, I know not, for I never inquired. I had no home to sorrow for—no far-away friends to regret, my comrades of "the Queen's Own" excepted, and they, I knew, might soon forget us amid other scenes and faces; our names would disappear from the Army List, and our fate become a regimental tradition, to be recurred to casually at mess, or by our soldiers as they chatted at night round the guard-room fire. My whole thoughts, and all my interest—all my soul—were concentrated in the idea of Cecil and her danger; and my bosom swelled with a bitterness that has no parallel, as I thought of the present or the past, of all that was once, of all that was now, and, under a more fortunate star, of all that might have been.

Though so many years had elapsed since first I loved and had been separated from her, years that were an eternity to a lover, my regard had never diminished, her image had never been forgotten; and now, when we were crushed and encompassed by misfortune, no language can tell how I loved, how I revered her, my own Cecil! Her presence, her idea, and her name, were woven with every early wish and aspiration; thus Heaven only knows how deeply that dear love was impressed on my boyish heart, with the impress that could never fade while life remained. One alone knew, how in secrecy and solitude I had mused over many a pretty nothing and winning turn of manner, over the sweetness of those dear dark eyes, and the kind accents of that remembered voice

I once thought would never again gladden me in this weary world.

Now, for a third, and too probably the *last* time, we were about to be separated, and with the whirl of these terrible thoughts, and the hot fierce rays of the soaring sun darting on my uncovered head, I feared greatly that madness, a coup-de-soleil, or some equally frightful catastrophe might soon end all my woes and her most slender chance of escape together.

These thoughts I could no longer suppress, and spoke to Langley of my early passion for Cecil, our separation twice before, and though he felt the loss of the innocent Arabian girl more keenly than I could have believed possible in one of his gay and volatile temperament, he kindly endeavoured to console and draw me from present affliction, by referring alternately to the past and to the future.

"I always admired a pair of young lovers," said he; "there is something so charming in a first passion, when a man is young, and 'womanhood is in the flush,' in the love of a boy for a pretty girl."

"Yes, believe me, dear Langley," said I sadly, "though often stigmatized as folly, it is more frequently the dearest and deepest of all loves, and the longest remembered, the love of a brother and a sister, or of a cousin for a cousin, with a keener tie, and being the first and most strongly impressed upon the young heart, is the most tender and most true. Ah, Fred, if you knew all the unspeakable tenderness stirred within me by the tone of Cecil's voice, after our long separation! It is like the old song that hushed us *o*—leap, long, long ago; it goes to my inmost heart; I have drunk *a* every word—I have closed my eyes when she spoke, and striven to believe that we were but a boy and girl again; that the woods of Aikendean shook their summer leaves above us, and that the mountain burn brawled beside them; that my old father's manse, with its ivied chimneys, and the village kirk with its grey walls were near, and that ten dreary years of sorrow and separation had never passed but in a hideous dream. God help us!—would that it were indeed a dream!"

The heat became intense; we were drenched in perspiration; a mortal agony was conduced by thirst and lassitude; and when eagerly we reached a wayside well, we were not allowed to drink till every Arab, negro, horse and dromedary had quenched their thirst, and then we were permitted to stoop on our fettered hands to quaff the hot sandy puddle, till the butt-end of the lance was again employed unsparingly to goad us on. I had one consolation, that Cecil travelled with more bodily ease, and that our sufferings were unknown to her.

Heavens! how my blood boils when I think of the cruelty and insults to which we were subjected, especially by the black eunuchs of Osman Oglou. The wound I had inflicted on his square nasal protuberance during our conflict on the bank of the river, was an

additional incentive for him to hate me; and Ali Badr frequently glibed him by saying,

"Poor Osman! now thou art stigmatized on the nose, like Al Walid, who fought at the battle of Bedr."

This reference to his wound (for a slash on the nose has been considered a mark of ignominy ever since Al Walid Ibn al Moghiera, the inveterate foe of Mahomed, had his face disfigured at the fight of Bedr, thirteen hundred years ago,) always filled the black eunuch with rage, and he ground his teeth while he surveyed me, and could scarcely withhold the point of his spear from my breast.

Anxiety for the fate of Amina, the recent excitement we had undergone, our frequent immersions, and the burning heat which now succeeded the recent rains, all acting together on the mind and body of Langley, produced a dangerous fever, which in three hours prostrated all his energies. He complained of acute pains in his head and loins, with an oppressive weariness in the limbs, and (notwithstanding the fiery state of the atmosphere) of a coldness in his hands and feet. Then came a great sickness, with shivering and fits that amounted to paroxysms. As each of these possessed him I thought he would have died, and implored Ali Badr to place some covering over him, as he lay on the arid plain near Alac, exposed to a burning sun, while the listless Arabs sat on their saddles gazing in sullen curiosity on his sufferings. But no covering was given, not even a handkerchief or a shawl. One more merciful than his fellows placed a leathern bottle of water (milk-warm by the march) to his lips, and I spread the broad leaves of a wild plant that grew near over his face and breast, to shield them from the hot rays of the vertical sun; but I could only procure such as grew within arm's length, being secured to the sufferer by a strong rope.

At this time I forgot my own sufferings and danger, for it made my heart ache to see this highbred English gentleman—one reared in the lap of luxury and ease—my dear friend and brave brother officer, lying writhing on the ground in this unheeded agony, and thus degraded and abused.

After the second or third paroxysm had passed away and consciousness returned, the prick of a spear was again applied, as a warning to march, and again our toil began; but now the dromedary which carried Cecil, and which was guarded by the eunuchs (for she was their peculiar care), was far in front. Langley moaned mournfully and clung to my arm for support; and I was happy that my harder culture or native strength enabled me to succour him, and thus for the incredible distance of twenty great Arabian miles we trod on till nightfall. About that time, when near a castle of the Arabs, he cried aloud,

"Heaven help me, for now I can endure no more!" and throwing up his hands, fell to the ground in despair.

Though I was scarcely able to stand, Osman Oglou forced me to take him on my back, and thus loaded to stagger into the fort, when

the rope which bound us, was replaced by a fetter of iron, that confined us within seven feet of each other, and thus secured, we were thrust into a damp and naked vault, on the floor of which lay a little straw. I gathered it all into one place, and laying poor Langley down on it, placed his head upon my knees for a pillow, and setting my back against the hard stone wall, endeavoured to compose and arrange my thoughts, as the darkness deepened round us, and one by one the stars, each in succession new, peeped from the blue sky through the small grated aperture, which admitted air by night, and light and air by day. I knew not whether Cecil was in the same fortress, as I had lost sight of her dromedary about dusk. She was gone now, and I could feel the charm of her presence no more!

Langley endeavoured to sleep, but the cold aguish shiverings which came over him were incessant, and I had no warm or soothing draught to offer him, nothing but the cold and half-stagnant water of a dirty jar; and now indeed I began to despair of his life. After a long and most melancholy silence, broken only by a long-drawn sigh, or his moanings, he said—

“Hilton—my dear fellow, where are you?”

“Here, here, beside you, Fred; what can I do for you?”

“Nothing; you have done all you could; God bless you, poor Frank; I will not trouble you long now.”

“For Heaven’s sake, dear Langley, do not say so!” said I, imploringly, while my heart swelled anew.

“Do you remember the figures we saw in the well?” he asked in a low whisper.

“Figures!” I repeated, as a terrible recollection flashed upon me.

“Yes—two men chained together, and *one* of them lying dead. Oh, Hilton, that strange vision is about to be verified to-night.”

I cannot describe the horror with which these words inspired me. I took poor Langley’s trembling hands in mine, and found them clammy and cold as icicles: but I could not see his face, for the vault was then as dark as the tomb to which he seemed fast hastening.

CHAPTER LXVI.

DELIRIUM.

THIS long, and seemingly interminable night of sorrow and horror passed away, and the grey light of morning began to struggle through the barred aperture of the vault. Notwithstanding the great fatigue we had endured, I had never closed an eye, nor felt inclined to do so; and the morning sun when he rose from his bed beyond the Indian Sea, found me feverish and sleepless, as when he had sunk beyond the land of the pilgrimage.

Poor Fred Langley was still alive ; but sinking fast. The smallest attention to his comfort—the smallest medical aid, such as one may meet with among civilized men, might have saved him ; but here the former was withheld, and the latter was not to be found, and as his disease was exasperated by agony of mind and the combined horrors of our situation, the life of my poor young friend was ebbing rapidly.

By this time he had ceased to moan for water ; but his mouth was black and parched, and his teeth were fearfully visible ; his eyes were protruding and haggard ; his cheek hot, pale, and hollow. Each succeeding paroxysm and cold shivering was more violent and more convulsive than the last ; each continued longer, and consequently left him weaker and to all appearance nearer death.

"My poor Hilton," said he, kindly, "from my soul I pity you—a prisoner—Cecil gone—Amina lost—myself dying ! You will be very lonely when I am away ; and who will tell my dear mother—my sisters ;—and who the regiment of all this ?"

My tears fell fast upon his cold hands, but I could make no reply.

"My dear mother's miniature, and the locket too !" said he, incoherently ; "the locket with the hair of Lucy, Dora, and dear little Fanny—to be in possession of that black wolf !"

Hilton, if you are spared to reach the regiment, will you remember what I say ? Send my sword and epaulettes to my mother ; keep my watch and ring to remind you of old times, and how Fred Langley loved you—(oh, what am I talking about ; the Arabs have them both !) Give Montague my riding-whip with the gold handle ; give Popkins my flute—(poor fellow, how often I have made fun with him !) and give every one something, not forgetting O'Hara, the colonel, for he is the best of good fellows ; and I don't like my goods and chattels auctioned over the drum-head. Can you remember this ?"

"I will endeavour to do so."

"You must—you must ! How strange that the prediction of that woman should com ; true ?"

Then his mind wandered again to Amina, for the dread of dying without freeing, saving, or once more beholding her, was as strong within him as his sorrow and reluctance to leave me alone in this land of privation and danger. After being long silent, a faint shiver passed over his face, the eyes turned upward, and the jaw fell ! I covered my eyes with my hands, and my heart seemed rising to my mouth, as the terrible conviction came over me that he was dead, and I indeed—alone ! most fearfully alone, for I was chained to his body.

Springing up and crying for aid in English, I suddenly rushed towards the door, but in doing so dragged the body off the straw by the chain which secured us together. I beat with my bare hands on the strong barrier, and cried aloud for help, beseeching those who might hear me to come, and using every phrase and fashion of speech that might move an Arab heart. The noise I made found hearers,

for footsteps rang in the passages, and I heard the fastenings of the door undone.

I clasped my hands, and gazed alternately at the hateful barrier and the silent body.

"Heaven be thanked," I thought, "aid comes, and it may not be too late, even yet!"

The door opened, and the black face and shining eyes of Osman Oglou were before me. Had a cobra capella appeared, I could not have shrunk back with more aversion than I did from this malignant negro, who, like all persons of his class and position, regarded other men with hatred, envy, and malevolence. He coldly surveyed the scene before him for a moment, as if gloating upon it; for we were then as low as Oriental tyranny could wish us—confined in a bare vault—nude, or nearly so, and chained together—the living and the dead.

"Art thou mad, fellow, to make all this hideous noise?" he asked; "knowest thou not that we slit the tongues of the noisy, and that nothing prevents me from slitting thine but the necessity of setting thee whole and sound before the sultan, to be the better able to endure what it may be *his pleasure* to inflict."

"My friend is dying—"

"Well?"

"Nay, he is dead—yet I called for aid——"

"Aid for the dead?" said Osman, with a grin that spread from ear to ear, as he stepped forward a pace; "Kafir, thou art mad indeed. All the virtues in the three phials of Lckman would not restore him now. Hah! so the soul of this unbeliever is indeed in the pit of Borhût."

As he said this, his square nostrils (across which there was a long black patch) distended, and his eyes rolled with rancorous hatred; he raised his foot to spurn the lifeless body, but I threw myself between, and cried,

"Dare to do so, scoundrel; dare to do this indignity, and I will strangle you where you stand!"

He drew back, with his hand on his jambea; spat a mouthful of opium full in my face, and hastily retired, closing and securing the strong door behind him.

The conflicting emotions that agitated me, the toil I had undergone, the malaria of the place in which I was confined, the want of sleep, and total deprivation of all rest for mind and body, were now beginning to act upon me severely. I felt a giddiness coming over me, and it seemed as if the vault swam round, for I followed with my eye the circular motion of the grated window, as if fearing to lose sight of it. I lifted Fred's body, which was yet warm, upon the heap of straw; I tore a shred from my cummerbund to bind up the head and jaw, and seated myself beside it. Then it seemed as if a darkness—a gloom—studded however by a thousand sparkling spots,

descended over me, and a stupor took possession of all my shattered faculties.

I was delirious; I talked to poor Fred, and to myself.

I saw before me old faces, and the incidents of other times. I was with Cecil at home in the drawing-room at Fairy-bank; she was seated at the piano, and I turned over the leaves of her music; we laughed and talked gaily as we were wont to do, in those bright days of heedless youth and cloudless happiness; I saw the pretty village of Aikendean, smiling among its woods in the sunlit glen below, as hand in hand and with our young hearts full of the purest joy, we rambled together by the brawling burn: anon the scene changed, and the wild sea whirled round me, dark, fierce, and strong; a piece of wreck floated past—it was that terrible fragment of the Farnham Castle which had caused such consternation in my heart, near the isle of Abdul Kuria. Then my company of soldiers hovered before me; I saw their well-known faces—their scarlet uniforms and white belts; and then came other visions, all wavering, vague, and indistinct.

Day came, and night succeeded.

Day came again, and still I was conscious of being chained to Langley's body; the limbs had become rigid, shrunken, white, and ghastly; muscle, bone, and sinew were fearfully visible, and hideous flies and creeping things rested in swarms alternately upon it, and the pot of rice that stood untouched between us. At times I thought that the body moved and the face smiled—that the eyes opened and shut; but I knew that my senses were leaving me!

Idea of the heat of the climate and of the rapid decomposition of all dead matter floated clearly enough before me, and I can never portray the new horror they occasioned.

I sat with face averted from the dreadful sight of my decaying friend, and shuddered when some of those insects that hovered on his pallid face and limbs, crawled over mine. I lost all consciousness of time, for many days and nights seemed to pass, which, I am *now* conscious, could not have passed; the air became as if loaded with poison; a cloud was ever around me, and through that cloud black Osman's hateful visage grinned at times. An oppressive sense of poor dead Langley's presence was ever about me, and I now believed that his remains had reached that awful stage of decay which living men can seldom, perhaps never behold; and now my brain seemed to turn, and a deep, deep sleep descended upon me.

I must have been long delirious, but cannot say for what length of time.

On recovering, I was lying upon the straw in a corner of the vault, and on rising, found my chain was free and that it rattled loosely. Fearfully I looked round, but save myself the vault was empty. Langley's body had been removed, and I struggled in vain to arrange my thoughts—to separate reality from the wild visions of frenzy, and to ascertain whether or not the horrors of the past days and nights were veritable and real, or the mere results of an over-

heated fancy. No trace of my friend's body remained; the pure morning air streamed through the barred aperture into the bare bleak vault, and the rising wind stirred the straw on which I lay.

I drew the loose chain towards me, and long and sadly pondered over the circular fetter which had enclosed the wrist of as brave a gentleman as ever wore the uniform of "the Queen's Own." I then wondered where his grave lay, if it was in a green place, or among the yellow sand, and whether my own would be made beside it. But perhaps he had never been entombed at all!

And Cecil—where now was she?—

Several days and nights passed wearily and monotonously on. I had counted every stone in the walls and every nail in the door that lay between me and Cecil—between me and exertion, liberty, and life!

I remembered the fate, or rather the mystery which involved the disappearance of those two enterprising officers, Stoddart and Conolly, in Bokhara. I remembered, too, a terrible story told me by a brother officer of the 62nd or Wiltshire Regiment, of his finding two British officers separately confined in the lowest dungeons of a hill fort in India after it had been stormed by our troops. There these captives, who were returned by the "Gazette" as "missing" in some old and forgotten engagement, had been confined for years; one was a youth when he had been taken prisoner, and now he was a careworn and middle-aged man; the other had been a major in the prime of life, and now he was in extreme old age. They had almost forgotten their own language; they were reduced to living skeletons, and overgrown with hair. For forty long years no ray of hope had lighted their solitude, or lessened their despair for the loss of the world, and they gazed on the red uniforms of their deliverers with the astonishment and perplexity of savages, for their minds had become unhinged and their brains unsettled. Then the younger man wept, and the elder smiled with vacant apathy.

His terrible relation was ever before me; yet I did not dread it, for I had a perfect conviction that I could never survive for years as those poor men had done.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE VIZIER ARRIVES.

ONE morning the thunder of gongs (like the roaring of wild animals) and the clash of cymbals announced something unusual, and the old Arab, who kept the key of my prison, and who once in each day brought me two jars—one filled with water, and the other with boiled rice or dhourra, which I ate by means of my fingers, informed me that "the great Rabd-al-Hoosi—the friend and vizier of Solyman—the Light of Wisdom, and Star of Piety, had come to convey me Sana, and to the feet of the holy imaum."

This sudden arrival of my countryman, the ex-ploughman of St. Ronan's, led me to hope that something might be done to ameliorate the excessive misery of mind and body I had endured and was still enduring; but I was speedily undeceived, and moreover surprised and shocked, to find that a set of chains which *he had brought* on purpose, were linked upon me; and that without being led into his presence, I was acquainted by my old keeper that at daybreak next morning I was to be conveyed ~~t~~^towards the capital. At that time I was too weak to feel much indignation at the ungenerous conduct of my countryman, but I still remember being sorry that he should be wicked enough to treat me so unworthily; of this, more anon.

That night I prayed fervently for Cecil; in all my misery I do not think one selfish thought for myself occurred to me; and though I felt lonely—oh, lonely indeed!—since poor Langley's loss, on reflection it seemed better that he had thus escaped the awful punishment to which the tyrant sultan was certain of subjecting me. By daybreak next morning I was conveyed from the vault into the court of the fortress, which appeared very old and half in ruins; and there were Ali Badr and Osman Oglou, with their mounted troop, and a little apart was the vizier, whom I knew by his rich turban and its sparkling jewel. He was magnificently armed and mounted, and a troop of the sultan's horse guard was beside him, with their glittering lances and sabres.

A beautiful camel, having plumes on its head and gorgeous housings and harness, was now brought forth. On its back was a curtained seat adorned with little pennons and streamers, and my heart leaped within me at the sight of it, for therein I knew Cecil was confined! Had a mountain of uncounted gold been mine, I would have given it all, every coin, for a moment by her side: despite guards and eunuchs, swords and lances it was with difficulty I could restrain my inclination to spring forward and tear the silken hangings down. Yet it was fortunate indeed that she could not see me, as I was then stripped of every article of clothing save a scanty linen girdle, with a beard of several weeks' growth; pale, emaciated, and loaded with heavy irons. On perceiving the prime minister of the sultan, I rushed up to him, and exclaimed,

"Rabd-al-Hoosi—or Robert Dalhousie—whichever you will! you are our countryman—Cecil's and mine—will you save us—can you, will you not at least save her? For the love of mercy, and the memory of that dear Scottish home, we never more may see—oh, hear me, for her sake, hear me!"

"It is impossible," said he, gloomily; "as well might I hope to save you from the powers of heaven itself. I am without strength—without authority—in such a matter, and supplications are in vain."

He turned away, and, as he did so, my last hope vanished. I would have addressed him again, but anger at the fetters with which he had loaded me, and the evident wish on his part to avoid all

further recognition, as he never looked once again towards me, repelled the inclination, and after rejecting, with disdain, the mess of boiled rice that was offered me, I was attached to a horse's girth, and the march began. Rabd-al-Hoosi rode at the head of the cavalcade, and near the camel, which—without being informed of it—I knew but too well bore all that was dear to me. Mahmoud Ali Badr, with a score of lances, protected the rear, and the rest of this picturesque band, with their garments flowing and weapons gleaming, rode by twos or threes, just as suited their fancy or convenience.

In a town through which we passed, all the inhabitants were ordered to retire on pain of death, lest they should obtain even a glimpse of the "chosen slave of the sultan;" and one unfortunate fellow, being found asleep in the sunshine, was struck senseless by a blow of Black Osman's lance. This, however, did not prevent others from pressing around, and greeting me with shouts of opprobrium; and every petty missile that came to hand, such as decayed oranges, eggs, melons, and even pebbles, were showered upon me.

"Show us the dog that defiled the imaum's beard!" cried one, "Throw dust upon his head!" cried a second.

"Ah, Kafir—hell yawns for thee! *Thou* daredst to steal the pearl of Hesn-al-Mouhabib—the slave who is queen of all slaves—the light of the seraglio."

"Mayest thou eat dirt all the days of thy life, if he escapes thee, Osman Oglou."

Osman grinned like a hungry shark at each of these remarks. It was a relief to me when this town, or collection of Arab hovels, with its roofs of reed, its walls of white chunam, and its yelling populace, were left behind; and when once more we rode over the grassy plain beyond it, though each step brought me nearer to Sana—nearer to greater misery, and nearer to death. As the sun was now approaching the meridian, I endured the greatest torture from the excessive heat, and large blisters were raised on my skin; while to protect my head, I had frequently to place upon it my heavily fettered hand. Perceiving this, Ali Badr, with something of his former kindness, gave me a horsecloth from his crupper, saying,

"The Holy Prophet will remember the merciful, and torture enough is awaiting thee. Cover thyself with this, and remember Mahmoud Ali."

After giving thanks, I earnestly besought him to inform me if the body of my friend had been buried, and if so, where it lay.

"The body was flung over the castle wall at night. I tell you so, Faringi, with some reluctance and shame, for the dead man was a brave soldier; but it was done by the orders of Osman Oglou."

"Thrown over the wall!" I ejaculated, claspings my hands.

"It fell into the swamp below, and in the morning it had disappeared; the wadi is full of wild animals."

"Oh, what a burial!" thought I, turning away in disgust from the Arab. Two days we continued travelling towards Sana but still

I could perceive no sign of its gilded domes and snow-white minars, when the evening of the second day was closing, and my tormentors halted near a wood, for the purpose of encamping for the night, not far from where I observed two bare human skulls appearing above the turf; these were the remains of two prisoners, who, after a barbarous fashion of the Bedouins, had been buried alive, up to the neck in earth, and left thus to perish miserably.

Until then, I had no idea that Langley and I had progressed so far eastward from the capital of Yemen. During those two days I had endured hardship, insult, and barbarity beyond expression and description—forced, though sinking under weakness of body and grief of heart, to travel on; forced by the point or butt-end of the lance, exposed, without proper raiment, to the scorching and blistering sun by day, and to the drenching and dangerous dews by night; forced to seek rest on the bare ground, and denied the use even of a pack-saddle whereon to lay my aching head, or a rug to cover me; having a handful of boiled rice thrown to me as to a dog, and being allowed to quench my insatiable thirst only after every Arab, horse, and dromedary had drunk to their own satisfaction; incessantly greeted with blows which I dare not return, and epithets which I treated with disdain.

There was one dromedary laden with flowers in china vases for placing around Cecil during a halt; and all these flowers were carefully watered at sunset before I was allowed to approach the fountain. Fettered, watched, and weary as I was then, an idea of escape never occurred to me. How could I attempt to escape and leave Cecil behind me?

The evening of the second day of toil had deepened into night; the stars were coming brilliantly out of the deep and dark-blue sky; and scarcely a bowshot from the dromedary which bore Cecil, and which was now kneeling down, under its sorrowful burden, to repose for the night—I was then lying among the long reedy grass, weeping in despair, broken in spirit, wrung in heart, and crushed in soul—weeping as I had never wept since I was a boy, many, many years ago. My agony was unseen or uncared for; drugged with opium and hempsced, the Arabs were all in a state of somnolency, all, at least, save their sentinels, five of whom were posted round the camp, and sat watchfully near their horses, with their muskets loaded.

In the midst of my paroxysm of grief, some one touched me on the shoulder.

I looked up, and beheld a figure muffled in a great rough barracan, and in the next moment became aware that it was no other than Rabd-al-Hoosi.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

FREE !

"UNFORTUNATE man," said the vizier, in a voice of sincere compassion, as he forgot his Arabian, his Koran, and bombast together; "the fate before you is terrible, for the imaum has sworn, by the only oath that was ever known to bind him for good or for evil, to have you flayed alive and then rolled in fine salt and vinegar."

"I care not," said I, gloomily; "no tortures that the most infernal imagination among you can conceive are equal to those I have already endured and am now enduring—mentally, at least."

"Our stars cannot be for ever in the ascendant," he replied; "take courage—your guards are asleep—you are not yet *dead*, and while there is life there is hope."

"And these ponderous chains?" said I, reproachfully.

"Are mere mockery," he replied, "for they are as brittle as glass, and may be shattered on the first stone at hand. Thus it was I brought them for you—as a veil, as a blind. Conceal these in your cummerbund—this purse, this pistol and poniard," he added, taking the three articles named from his rich silk girdle; "creep past the sentinels, and escape to the mountains. I can do no more but say 'God speed ye,' for auld lang syne; though I have a shaven head and a long beard, a turban and benish, be assured there is more of the kindly Scot than the barbarous Arab in my heart."

I had no voice to thank him, and continued to linger irresolutely.

"Away, away!" said he, in the same impressive whisper; "my head may answer for it, if we are discovered. I am risking my life, position, and fortune to save you."

"But Miss Marchmont——"

"Alas! think not of her, sir," he replied, with somewhat of Oriental coolness; "if the sultan still continues to love her, she is lost to you; if he has learned to hate her, then is she not the less lost; for the Koran has ordained that the slave who is guilty of adultery shall suffer half the punishment of the free woman, and this elopement with you will be viewed as a breach of the commandments by the sultan and the Yemenees."

My blood ran cold at these words, for I knew that by the old Mahomedan law, such persons were brought to the door of a mosque, where their faces were blackened, and then they were scourged to death with rods, or stoned by the people.

"I beseech you not to linger, Mr. Hilton," said my countryman; "for if you were not immediately put to death when taken by Mahmoud Ali and the chief eunuch, it was merely because the sultan could not readily devise torments which come up to what he considered the full measure of his wrath and your crime."

"But to leave Cecil!" I moaned.

"Can you save her, situated as you now are?" he asked, impatiently.

I could only clasp my hands in mournful silence.

"Away, then, I tell you—there is not a minute, not an instant to be lost. Seek Mohamed of the Abdali—the Sheikh Abdumelik, or your friends at Aden. Remain, and to-morrow beholds you torn limb from limb in the streets of Sana."

"And you—I compromise your honour and safety by this."

"Fortunately Solyman believes you to be a magician; but away I tell you—away!" he said, impatiently; and shaking my hand kindly, retired to his couch at the foot of a tree.

In one hand I had the pistol, and in the other the poniard. I hesitated only a moment, to implore protection from Above, and then hastened to leave the place, though Cecil still was there!

CHAPTER LXIX.

BLACK OSMAN AGAIN.

THE night was dark now. There was no moon in the sky; a faint streak of reddish saffron light, blending with greenish blue, lingered in the west to mark the quarter of the sun's descent, and therein a few stars were twinkling. Three ruined columns and one dark drooping palm-tree stood between me and the west in strong black outline. Above, the clouds were rolled in dusky masses, and from these the dew fell heavily. All was still, save the snorting of the sleeping guards, and the gurgling sound made by the dromedaries, which were reposing on their knees. I could perceive the dark figures of the sentinels, with their horses picketted to their long lances, the tips of which glimmered red in the flame of the sinking watch-fire.

I knew that it would be no easy task to elude these men, who were accustomed to detect every unusual sound even at a great distance; but I had learned much of their own cunning and many of their wiles while among them, and with the pistol cocked, in my right hand, and the poniard in my teeth, I crept, with snake-like caution, on my face and knees through the long damp grass, choosing the most deep and shady places; and thus I passed unseen, though close to two who were engaged in the friendly act of giving and receiving a light from the bowls of their Turkish pipes. Creeping thus for more than a hundred yards, at last I rose to my full height, and freely drew my breath, while a glow of rage and hatred swelled up in my breast with something of fierce exultation to find myself *free*, and I clutched the brass butt of the pistol with fierce energy, and looked back to the Arab bivouac.

To rid myself of the fetters was my first thought, and on looking about, I discovered among the reedy jowlies a mass of rock. Re

remembering the words of the vizier, I dashed the heavy rings against its flinty face, and at the second stroke they fell from my wrists, and I tossed them away with disgust. A glow of hope spread through my heart, and I was about to continue my retreat from this dangerous vicinity, when the tall, white, figure of a man, whom the clatter of my irons had startled, came hurriedly towards me. I at first thought he was a sentinel, but immediately after perceived that my interceptor was no other than—Osman Oglou, who, either for prayer or sleep, had rolled himself up in his barracan beside this lonely rock.

He recognised me in a moment; and in the dusk of midnight his aspect was terrible, for his turban was white as snow, and his protruding eyes glared as he surveyed me with astonishment and rage, which for a time deprived him of the power of utterance; and so we grimly surveyed each other.

I feared to fire, for his people were close by; but perceiving at once that with a short pomard I was unequal to the task of encountering the heavy Arab sword, which he unsheathed, I shot him right through the jaws, and as he was falling backwards without a cry, tore from him a locket that hung at his neck, and dashed off with all the speed I could exert into the open country. The locket proved to be the same which my poor friend Langley had been deprived of, for it contained the bright brown English hair of his three fair sisters. Long and sadly I gazed upon it in my place of concealment next day, and resolved, as I secured it in my cummerbund, if I was spared ever again to tread upon the free soil of happy Britain, that I would restore this relic to his family.

I ran on until my bare, torn, and trembling limbs could carry me no further, and at every pace my heart upbraided me for placing such a distance between myself and Cecil. On pausing and looking back towards the fire of the Arab bivouac, I could perceive it burning dimly on the grassy plain about a mile distant; but from thence there came no sound, no halloo of pursuit or alarm, on the wind. Thus I knew well, that roused by the pistol report and the moans of the wounded eunuch—for Black Osman was only wounded and not killed—the entire party would be silently, softly, and surely scouring the whole vicinity to recapture me.

Overpowering fatigue and past excitement rendered me incapable of further exertion, and being aware of the necessity for recruiting my wasted strength, to enable me to follow the cavalcade next day, and make some effort to succour Cecil, I looked round for a place of concealment; and knowing that one *near* the bivouac might escape discovery, while another more distant might be found, I took my measures accordingly. Finding a deep rent in the earth, caused either by the long draughts or the recent rain, fearless of snakes, adders, and poisonous insects, I crept in, and sought a place where the long green jowlies, the wild dhourra, the leaves of the tamarisk, and other luxuriant weeds, formed a natural matting over me, and

there, with a beating heart, an aching head, and a wearied body, I lay down to rest—to sleep and to dream—with a dagger in my hand.

Rest never came, but a sleep—the slumber of exhausted nature—a sleep that refreshed me not, for it was disturbed by many a painful dream and convulsive start, descended on my eyelids; and the hot morning sun had come up in his brilliance from the hills of Yemen, the leaves of the tamarisks had unfolded, and the stalks of the jowlie had risen from the dew, before I awoke and raised my head from among them, like a fox from its lair. Starting, I looked anxiously towards where the vizier had bivouacked over-night; but the plain was empty. There remained no trace of those I sought!

CHAPTER LXX.

THE MEN OF ROBA EL KHALI.

I RUBBED my eyes to be assured that I was awake. The vast extent of a green plain, dotted by many a clump of palms and tuft of wild evergreens, and bounded by hills which swelled up softly in the hazy distance, was spread before me; but thereon I could perceive no living thing. They had departed with the earliest dawn, and now Cecil was indeed lost to me, unless I could overtake them before they reached Sana—a desperate hope for one on foot to overtake men mounted on swift horses and dromedaries. A wild burst of grief possessed me, and flinging myself despairingly on the ground, I buried my face in the grass, and ejaculated aloud. This fit was too painful to last long; but it relieved while it weakened me. After it passed away, I endeavoured to compose my thoughts, and resolved to follow the party of the vizier, if I could discover their route; but alas! I was not Arab enough for that, or to detect those trifling indications which mark the passage of their light-footed cattle over a grassy plain. The white ashes of the night-fire remained beneath the trees where I had seen it lighted; I saw the places where the grass had been bruised by the reposing dromedaries, and I knew where Cecil's had knelt. I saw the two bare skulls in the earth, and the spot on which I had flung myself down in despair, and where Rabd-al-Hoosi had given me his beautiful pistol and Damascus poniard. I recognised the fragment of rock (yet spotted by Black Osman's blood) on which I had dashed my chains; but nowhere could I perceive any trace of the route towards Sana, and I knew that the precautions usually taken by a secret party to obliterate their trail—such as brushing the grass with a branch for half a mile or so—would assuredly be taken by the vizier to prevent me following him, and that it was vain to attempt discovering it. I would have given the mines of Peru to possess that acuteness which enables the Arabs to track the feet of men and horses on the grass and sand.

So keen and sure is this gift of discernment, that they can tell whether or not such marks belong to their own tribe, and by their depth, whether or not the persons or animals were laden; whether they passed within an hour, a day, a week, or a month ago. This acuteness of vision, like their keenness of hearing, arises from the circumstance of their living so much, if not continually, in the open air.

I had so often seen the frowns of fate, and found hope smile behind them, when my fortune seemed at the lowest ebb, that I mentally upbraided myself with unmanliness in shrinking thus; and controlling, by an effort the choking swell of sorrow in my breast, sat down beside the deserted bivouac, and resting my head upon my hands endeavoured to arrange my thoughts and plans.

Now, indeed, my position was most desolate! Far separated from my regiment, distant from Mohamed-al-Raschid and old Abdumelik, (the only men who could succour me); my companion dead; my betrothed torn from me; stripped of clothing, destitute of protection and defence, I loitered in that Arabian solitude, a miserable and heart-broken outcast, and heedless of the hot unclouded sun, which soared above me into the clear and sparkling sky.

I could scarcely realize the truth of my position and believe in my own identity. It seemed that the whirl of startling events into which I had been plunged for the last few years were all a hideous dream; that my present desolate situation was but a part of it; and that I would awake, to find myself in my small barrack-room, when the drums beat *reveille* and the morning gun was fired. But, alas, no drums beat merrily, and no waking came!

The hot sunny plain with its drooping palms and waving cane tufts still remained before me, too palpably and too real; and it was over that plain Cecil had been conveyed from me! Bitter indeed were my self-upbraidings, for having closed an eye while she was near me, or while there lingered on one hand the shadow of a chance of freeing her, or, on the other, of being, as I was now, more surely separated from her. But enough of all this! I must not tire my readers with these unavailing regrets, and by describing the endless current of wild thoughts that whirled through my mind, for more adventures are yet to be related and other difficulties overcome.

After a time I endeavoured to judge by the position of the sun, where Sana stood, and regretting that I had been so long inert, departed from where the debris of the bivouac lay, with all the speed I could exert; but that was little, being under a burning sun, without covering for my head, save now and then a broad leaf spread over it, and while suffering the extremity of thirst. I felt no hunger, but the agony of this thirst became so great that I hailed with satisfaction the appearance of a large camp or village, the square black tents of which I discerned about a mile distant, dotting the sloping side of a hill, under the brow of a palm-tufted rock, from which a pure spring of water foamed into the hollow below. As I drew near.

I could perceive all the beauties of the spot, for there the arbutus, the dwarf oak, and the soft acacia grew by the margin of the tiny stream that flowed through the camp, from which the grunting of the grazing camels, the bleating of sheep, and the clatter of millstones were borne towards me on the soft breeze of the valley.

The yelling of the watch-dogs as I approached soon warned the Arabs of my presence; a crowd of gazing and clamorous boys soon came around me, and attracted by their shouts, the men quitted their tasks of grooming the horses and milking the cattle; the women left their daily occupation of grinding those handmills which are identically the same as our ancient Scottish querns; and throwing up their veils of blue cloth which had each two holes worked for the eyes, they rushed into the street of black tents, to behold the white skinned wanderer—the Faringi—who had suddenly come among them.

Amid the increasing crowd which surrounded me, and disregarded all my assertions that I came among them as a peaceful seeker of food and shelter, there was one ferocious-looking Bedouin, named Khaled Ibn Khobaid, whose face was like the profile of an eagle, and whose eyes were like those of a snake. Under his red turban, this man gazed at me for a few moments, and then rushing forward, grasped me by the hair (for I had on no garment that afforded so ready a handful), and while others deprived me of my poniard and now empty pistol, he exclaimed, with savage joy,

"Praised be the Prophet! he is one of the Kafirs who came with Kior Ibn Kogia, the Abdala, to our camp near Jebel Ahmer, and after eating bread and salt with us, shot my brother on the mountains."

"The shot was fired by the Abdala," said I, "and the Santon Nouredin said it was the judgment of heaven."

"The santon is a presumptuous fool," retorted Khaled; "how should *he* be assured of that, and pretend to whether it was heaven's judgment, or not?"

"Peace," said another, named the Moolah Abu Beer, "and remember the santon hath already reached the fifth degree of earthly perfection and sanctity."

"Dog," said a third Bedouin, "we thought you were all three buried in the mountain by the falling rocks. Oh! thou lying santon, who hast cast dirt on our beards."

"Away with him to the sheikh," cried several voices; "Sheikh Ibrahim awaits him."

I now found to my dismay (if anything could dismay one so miserable) that I had fallen among our former acquaintances, the Bedouin robbers from Roba el Khali, the Abode of Emptiness. I was pushed and dragged along the streets of tents, which were made of black haircloth, and pitched by the margin of the rivulet. A lance, adorned by a plume of feathers, was stuck into the turf before a larger tent, and announced the residence of Sheikh Ibrahim, and there

I was immediately taken by a few of the leading Arabs, among whom was the fierce and clamorous brother of that man whom Kior, the Abdala, had shot.

The tent of Ibrahim might have measured about twelve feet by six and thirty, and was curtained off into two apartments by a Damascus carpet of green cloth, nailed on upright posts. The floor of the outer chamber was covered with coarse carpeting, from the manufactories in the khalafat of Hadramaut. The furniture consisted of saddles, goatskin jars for holding milk and butter, large water-bottles of camel's skin, horse buckets, hand querns of stone, wooden dishes and coffee-pots, while some beautifully executed weapons, such as swords, muskets, and bucklers, with a steel skull-cap and shirt of mail hung from the principal pole of the tent. On a couch of pack-saddles sat old Sheikh Ibrahim, wearing a well-soiled turban, with a cloth tucked by one of his wives under his long beard, to save his striped shawl from grease spots, as he was at dinner; and with angry astonishment he raised his quick small glittering eyes—every glance of which betrayed a volume of cunning and cruelty—from the tray of cheese and curds before him, and with his right hand buried to the knuckles in a mess of boiled rice and pot herbs, asked—

"In the name of all the devils, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

The Bedouin in the red turban soon made him aware.

"Ahi—is it so?" said the old sheikh, with a malicious grin. "Art thou one of those of whom yonder santon cheated us? A Kafir of Aden—yet a friend of Mohamed, the Abdala? Answer me truly, O dog, and say wherefore thou hast thrust thy unclean and unholy person among us again?"

"In search of water, for I am perishing of thirst, and to find food, not having broke bread for many hours."

"Men who are to die," said Khaled, "require neither."

"Peace be with you, sheikh," said I, "and may your house be prosperous—all I have is yours."

"Of course it is," said he, conveying a handful of rice to his mouth; "an old cummerbund is not much, however."

Perceiving the danger in which I stood, I suddenly dipped my hand into the sheikh's dish and took a mouthful of the rice.

"Mayest thou burn eternally, dog of a Frank!" said he, furiously, flinging the bowl to the farthest corner of the tent. What does that act of daring mean?"

"That now we have eaten together and dipped our hands in the same dish, and I claim the protection due—by this tent (I added emphatically, laying my hands on the centre pole),—by this tent, and the lives of its owners, I claim it!"

Khaled Ibn Khobaid, the Bedouin in the red turban, uttered a growl of anger on finding himself outwitted, and said, while shaking his clenched hand in my face,

"Mayest thou writhe under the devil's jaw till the day of doom!"

Kafir, in this thou hast outwitted us all, but still thou art not beyond the reach of the Arab;" meaning that though he could not slay me while I remained among them, a time would come when the temporary protection which an old and time-honoured custom enforced, would cease.

That my life and liberty, if preserved, might be serviceable to Cecil, was my only thought; yet I would have surrendered both cheerfully, if convinced that by such a sacrifice I could place her safely within the gates of our barracks at Aden, or anywhere else among civilized men. To be among these Bedouins was a peril as deadly as any I had yet encountered, for they are the wild men of the desert whom even the martial Prophet of the East could never tame, and who in the Koran are styled constantly rebels and infidels—men to whom danger was a pastime and human life a toy. Moreover, they are such expert thieves that they can almost steal the teeth out of one's head; thus I expected to be at once deprived of poor Langley's locket; but my appearance was so miserable and wo-begone that they never once thought of examining my cummerbund. When the anger of the sheikh, and clamour of the tribe on finding themselves cheated of my life (or rather of the atrocious scene of cruelty they anticipated) had subsided into silence, all were ordered to withdraw, the men to their milking and the women to their spinning, while Ibrahim consulted with his brother, who was named the Seyd, or Moolah Abu Beer, having once practised as a doctor, or quack man of science, at Mocha and Sana; and the result of their confab was this: that I should first receive refreshment, as they could not spill my blood; and thereafter, according to the barbarous fashion of the Bedouins, I should be buried to the neck in sand, and—unless I found a protector—be left there to die, when the tribe broke up from its camp next day.

I had heard of such things in the tales which the Emir Mohamed (when we knew him only as Yussef, the coffee merchant) was wont to relate in the Parsee's bungalow at Aden; I remembered, also, the two bare white skulls which were visible above the green turf of the place where Rabd-al-Hoosi had halted, and my blood ran cold when the decision of the sheikh and Moolah was announced to me, for I knew that among all the tribe of Ibrahim, there was no man who would stoop to be my protector. However, I devoutly trusted that the same Divine power which had guarded me amid so many dangers would yet befriend me—if not for my own sake, at least for the sake of *her* whom I considered a thousand times more worthy of such protection than myself. I partook of some goat's milk and bread, the flour of which was mixed with honey and baked on the embers, resolving to husband all my strength for the means of escape, when these barbarians left me.

The decision was hailed with noisy satisfaction by the tribe, but by none more so than the hook-nosed Bedouin, who had especially constituted himself my enemy and persecutor—Khaled Ibn Khobaid—a

name which still, though a few years have elapsed since then, excites anger within me. He dug a pit about five feet deep, and I was thrust into it, after my hands had been secured behind me by a cord; and thus they buried me up to the chin in the earth, which by their feet they trampled into a compact mass around me—so compact, indeed, that I could not breathe without difficulty. Around this living grave they piled a barricade of packsaddles and camp equipage, and after spitting at me, as an infidel and unbeliever, I was left, just as the sun was setting, to my own terrible reflections.

The last person who reviled me was a woman, an old and frightful one, who still retained the barbarous Arabian custom of daubing her orange-coloured visage with greenish paint, and her lips and teeth with a brick red tint; thus she looked like a veritable fiend, as, with her eyes encircled by kohel, she grinned at me, and disappeared behind the packsaddles. This was the principal wife of Sheikh Ibrahim.

Hope at last seemed sinking!

The Bedouins troubled themselves no more about me; even the tawny urchins of the camp soon ceased to peep at me with their dark faces and glittering eyes. The tasks of milking, grooming, and cheesemaking over, the men betook themselves to cleaning their weapons, playing at chess or draughts, singing, smoking, telling stories, and tossing the blunted spear.

The earth in which I was imbedded felt cool, and it grew cooler as the shadows of evening deepened and the sun began to sink behind the hills. At times the horror of being left thus entombed alive, with my head exposed to the bleaching dews and scorching sun, or to the claws and beaks of ravenous birds, became strong within me, and my heart grew sick at the contemplation. I had only one reflection to soothe me: that Cecil knew not of my danger; but when I thought of her from whom I seemed so hopelessly separated, a dreadful fear arose within me, that—sinking under all we had endured—she might be ill, or dying—nay, she might even then be dead, while I was far away and should never see her more. At these frightful suggestions I lost all recollection and sense of my own miseries, and a sleepy stupor stole over me.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE THREAD OF LIFE.

WHEN perfect consciousness returned, the bright moon of midnight was shining on the green plain, on the drooping palms, on the flower-tufted rocks, and the gurgling stream that meandered between the black tents of the Bedouins. Among them all was still, for the camp or village lay buried in sleep, and none were waking there, save their watchful mastiffs, which uttered an occasional growl at their posts,

or the camels and dromedaries, which emitted strange sounds, from time to time, from their capacious and peculiarly formed throats.

Around me the earth now felt burning hot, while my dew-besprinkled head and face were cold as ice. I made three desperate efforts to free my hands, but they were too tightly pinioned behind me, and the manner in which my limbs were wedged in the earth deprived me of the slightest power.

I uttered a half-stifled cry and closed my eyes, as my cheek fell on the dewy grass.

At that moment I felt a soft hand placed under my head, and a vessel, containing some kind of wine, was placed to my lips. I drank with gratitude and, on looking up, perceived the figure of an Arab girl, almost nude, for she had no other garment than a scanty petticoat of bright yellow striped stuff, and a slight cymar across her bosom. Her head had no other covering than the thick braids of her black hair, plaited with many a bead and coin; massive bracelets were on her bare arms, and she wore anklets above her sandals, which were then on a level with my eyes, and in these anklets I could perceive the white pearls glittering. Her bright eyes shone like two little stars as she knelt and stooped her face to mine; and in a moment I recognised Haura the Alma—the dancing girl of Oman, whom I had met before in the camp of Sheikh Ibrahim, who had warned me of impending danger, and shown to Fred Langley, in the fountain, what Fate had in store for one of us at least.

On recognising her, and remembering the terrible accomplishment of her warnings, I felt some repugnance for her, and instead of giving thanks for her kindness, I said, coldly,

"Are you come now to show me the miserable death I am to have among you—even as you showed my poor friend how he should die in yonder Arab castle?"

"I have not the making of your fate; I neither give men to life or to death; neither have I any power over the visions I may conjure up for those who ask me; for I never look upon them, and know not what those visions are; but hush," she added, as I was about to speak, "we must not be overheard. I am here to save you, if I can, from the most awful death a man can die; I am here to pay the debt of salt and friendship—"

"Then, for the love of Heaven and your Prophet, if you believe in either, free my neck from the earth, and my hands from these cords."

"I dare not," she said, in a low whisper.

"How," I asked, softly, on seeing that she looked fearfully round; "now, and why?"

"I am, like yourself, a prisoner, detained here by the Sheikh Ibrahim, that by dancing and story-telling I may amuse the women of his tribe."

"You are free hand and foot (oh, would that I were so!)—then why do you not escape now?"

"The dogs that guard the camp would tear me to pieces. It is very cruel of Heaven to keep me here among these barbarous Bedouins, while my gay companions are dancing merrily in the bazaars and market-places of Mocha and Medina; but I have complained to the holy Prophet of this injustice, and begged him to soften the hard heart of the Sheikh Ibrahim."

"And has he heard your prayers?" I asked, bitterly.

"It was a letter I wrote him."

"A letter to the Prophet!"

"To Mahomed resoul Allah — the only true Prophet," she said, impressively.

"And who delivered it?"

"I tied it to the leg of an eagle, who flew into the sky with it, and when the bird disappeared, I had no doubt the Prophet had received my letter."

"And the answer?"

"None has come yet; but daily I expect that the hard heart of Sheikh Ibrahim will be softened, and that he will set poor Haura free."

At another time I might have smiled at the perfect simplicity of the Alma, and the entire faith which she placed on the reception of her letter; but then no thought of smiling occurred to my tortured mind. The growling of the four-footed sentinels now startled the poor dancer. Placing between my teeth the end of a worsted thread, and begging me to retain it there, she stepped lightly over the barricade of camp furniture, and withdrew with the ball in her hand, unrolling it as she glided away; and, in the fashion of the Bedouins (whose barbarity is always tempered and redeemed by certain acts of charity), I knew that she would attach the other end to the tent of some one, who from thenceforward would be bound by every tie of the honour, law, and religion, which those children of the wilderness recognise—and more than all, by the strong force of ancient and superstitious custom—to become my *Protector*, even if I was the slayer of his own son.

I never saw this poor dancer again.

Though grown almost careless of how the event might prove, I was not without fear that some wandering dog or stray camel might break the slender thread that was to lead my protector to me, and I dared not unclench my teeth, lest by doing so it should drop from my mouth, after which I could have no means of recovering it, and then the whole tie existing between me and the Arab, to whose tent the other end was tied, would be gone. My life, indeed, now hung *upon a thread*, and I trembled to think on how frail a tenure it was held.

Wearily I watched and anxiously longed for morning, and warmly and brightly it came at last. The dawn was cold and pale, but as the rosy sun ascended into the unclouded sky, every leaf and branch, every blade of grass and bunch of flowers that grew on the shelves

of those basaltic rocks that overhung the camp, were gemmed in dew, and gleaming with prismatic colours. The thin pale mist arose from the hollow through which the small stream wound and rolled like gauze along the bases of the wooded hills. The air was full of delicious fragrance, and after the old sheikh had come to his tent door, and saluted the keblah, he cried with a loud voice, as I had once before heard him,

"There is no God but one, and Mahomed is his Prophet! mount and ride!" Then the Bedouin camp became filled with joyous sounds. The glad voices of children rushing down to the banks of the rivulet, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle and neighing of horses followed, as preparations were made for the march. The flocks having eaten up all the herbage around the present camp, a new one had to be sought, and the Seyd or Moolah Abu Beer having ascertained that the most *fortunate hour* was the first after sun-rise, at that moment precisely the tents were struck and the fires extinguished on every hearth.

Amid these preparations, when pulling up the pegs of his tent, my bitter enemy, Khaled Ibn Khobaid, discovered the clue of worsted which Haura had tied to one of them, and while his heart swelled with disappointed vengeance, he followed the windings of the thread until he came to where he had entombed me, just as my overstrained jaws were gradually and convulsively relaxing, as I could not have retained between my teeth that priceless—and yet infernal—thread for one instant longer.

In tying the clue to the tent of Khaled, the Alma showed the greatest tact and sense, for she thus converted into my friend—at least my protector—the only man in the tribe of Ibrahim who had an interest in my destruction.

I shall never forget the yellow glare of anger which shot from the shining eyes of Khaled, and the ferocious expression of his hawk-like nose, as he gazed at me, and snatching the thread from my mouth, kicked away the packsaddles, buckets, and kettles which had been piled around me. But the customs of the children of the desert are unchangeable as those seas of sand they love so well; and on its being announced that I had found "a protector" in Khaled Ibn Khobaid, he was laughed at by the whole tribe for being thus outwitted; and some who were better disposed than others, or had, perhaps, less to do, assisted him in exhuming and setting me once more on upper earth.

"My face is blackened among men!" said Khaled, with gloomy spite; "I appear as a fool before my women, my children, and my tribe, for I swore by the Kaaba to destroy thee, and now I must protect thee! To be a protector of thee—a Kafir—a dog, whose hands are red with the blood of my brother! I could tear my beard, and spit in my father's face when I think of it."

"Can I put trust in such a *protector*?" I asked. "Will no other here be my friend?"

"Trust!" said Khaled, scornfully; "thou mightest as well doubt the holy Koran itself, as doubt I will protect thee *now*—for thy life is secured; but thy body is mine, and I will keep thee as a grass-cutter and tent-pitcher, a groom and carpet-spreader, for such is the will of heaven."

From that time forward, veiling the excess of his hatred under a calm and dogged exterior, he conducted me to his tent, and after I had been bathed and purified from the earth, he set before me various dishes of rice, pulse, dates, and bread of dhourra, which is usually baked in balls among the embers, and eaten hot, the flour being ground very fine in the hand querns. Khaled partook of this breakfast with me; the remainder was given to the women and slaves, after which he began to harness and caparison his horses and mules, a task in which I felt myself under the necessity of assisting, seeking thus, but in vain, to win the favour of this sullen Bedouin.

With astonishing celerity the tents, with all their poles, pegs, and cords, the carpets and mats, cooking utensils and chattels of every kind, were packed on the sumpter animals; the old persons and very young children were perched on the summit of the baggage; the harem, or four wives of Sheikh Ibrahim, were similarly accommodated, but in little palanquins adorned with streamers; and soon all were mounted and ready for marching. Of the camp nothing remained but the ashes of the fires, the usual débris of bones and vegetables, and the worn marks and holes, which indicated where the tents had stood for some weeks past; and the moment Sheikh Ibrahim put spurs to his horse and drew his lance from the turf, the departure began.

Five hundred armed horsemen formed an advance guard, then came the flocks with their young, the mares with their foals, and the camels that were about to foal; then came all the beasts of burden, with the women, children, tents, and baggage, guarded and flanked by at least five hundred horsemen more. Most of these had slung matchlocks as well as lances, and when the brilliant colours of their blue, yellow, or striped shirts are considered, with their splendid horses, dark visages, and brilliant arms, the whole cavalcade had a most striking effect as it wound over the green mountains near Nedsjed ul Yemen, and took the direct route towards the great wilderness that lies between Mecca and Oman.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE ABODE OF EMPTINESS.

ALL day, even during the meridian, the cavalcade travelled in this direction, and with a heavy heart I trudged on foot beside the dromedary on which Khaled Ibn Khobaid rode at his ease, and from the hump of which he dealt me at times a scowl of malevolence.

When the sun set, the tribe had reached a green and beautiful hollow enamelled with flowers; from thence the hills arose on all sides like an amphitheatre, covered with waving woods, and where many springs of pure water welled from the black faces of the rocks. Charmed by the aspect of the place, the Seyd Abu Becr, whose advice his brother the sheikh never disputed, recommended a halt, and the formation of a camp for a few days, and the whole tribe dismounted and prepared to pitch their tents—all at least save Khaled, who being anxious to place me, as his slave, and a quantity of plunder he had acquired, in the stronghold of the tribe (an old fort that lay somewhere in the sterile district of Mahrah), continued his journey, taking with him three laden camels and a mule. He and two well-armed kinsmen rode the former, and as he was anxious to proceed, I was allowed to bestride the latter, on each side of which were hung two skins for holding water. We had a wild and most dangerous country to pass through, for the Mahrahs, whose province we were to skirt, are a savage and lawless tribe; but Khaled Ibn Khobaid trusted to his knowledge of the route and its secret paths, the speed of his camels, the excellence of his weapons, and the bravery of himself and his two companions, for reaching in safety this castle in the *Abode of Emptiness*, and depositing there the plunder he had gleaned up in Yemen. But the avaricious son of Khobaid reckoned without his host, for other and more terrible enemies than the swarthy Mahrahs were to bar his path to the great oasis.

For two days we continued travelling almost incessantly, unless I except a few brief halts during the chill midnight and the meridian heat. Before the evening of the second day closed in, we had left behind us the green hills, the groves of palm, walnut and plum-tree, and entered upon a desolate waste of white sand, a portion of that vast desert which lies in the centre of Arabia. During this journey the temper of Khaled became so morose, and the treatment of his two companions so savage and insulting, that nothing but the bitter conviction that I was defenceless as a child in their hands, and might be shot in an instant, prevented me from rushing on one or other of them, and killing him on the spot. I received no food until they had eaten, and dipped their dirty paws as often as they pleased in the wooden bowl of rice, pulse, dates, or kid's flesh, and then it was tossed to me, as one might cast it to an importunate and ungrateful cur.

Every half-hour my blood boiled up, but stifling my emotions of passion—for, strange to say, I confidently believed that my time of retribution and deliverance would come—I trod on in silence.

Before entering on this desert, at the last well we passed I was ordered to fill the water-skins that were slung on my mule, and as the distance we had to travel was great, the three Arabs used their food and water most sparingly—thus the share of both that fell to me was very small indeed.

With the view of attempting an escape on the first opportunity, I

carefully husbanded my strength and narrowly observed the mode in which my captors, or tormentors, managed their camels, for I had resolved "to levant" with one of those ponderous animals on the first opportunity; but we made several halts without the least chance being afforded me of making the attempt with success. On our first night's bivouac in the desert, after carefully examining the priming and loading of their arms, and lighting a fire by rubbing together two pieces of wood—one of the tree called Markh, and the other Afâr, which ignite at once, even though wet—(thus fulfilling the words of the Prophet, who spoke of "giving fire out of the green tree, and behold ye kindle your fuel from thence,")—they offered part of the *last* provisions they had—some locusts which had been fried on an iron plate and preserved in salt. No chance of escape occurred that night, for after smoking they went to sleep, two reclining against the kneeling camels, while one kept watch by turns, and with a sigh of sorrow and bitterness I laid my aching head upon a gathered heap of sand, and strove to sleep likewise, for I was aware that rest was necessary, and I knew not what another day might bring forth.

With dawn next morning we began our journey; and by what instinct these Arabs piloted their way, unerringly and confidently, over the desert in one direction, I know not; for to me it seemed all a bare and trackless waste. Behind us, the green hills, and every tree thereon, had sunk below the flat horizon, and on every side I saw only the white sand, with here and there an old palm having shrunken, crooked, and yellow branches, the oval blades of the prickly cactus, or the stunted shrubs of the desert, scorched, withered, and covered with dust or drifted sand. Here and there grew a tamarisk, a plant which springs in barren places and bears no fruit, but the camels always paused to crop its blades. As we progressed, even these vanished, and not a leaf or stone appeared to vary the whiteness of the desert; as the dawn brightened into day, the heat rapidly became more intense than any I had hitherto endured; yet I was still without sufficient covering, and forced at times to travel on my bare and blistered feet, (for the strength of my mule was failing,) on, on we went, but no vestige of shade or shelter, tree, or habitation, rock, or ruined well, presented itself to our strained and aching eyes.

The mighty plain of soft hot sand into which my feet sunk ankle-deep at every step, appeared like the bed of a sea dried up many thousand years ago; and one might have imagined that the sun of all those thousand years had scorched with fire the light and arid dust and snow-white pebbles that lay among it. We no longer heard a footfall as we proceeded, and the awful solitude of this terrible region made my sick and oppressed heart sink lower and more low at every pace.

We soon ran short of water, for there were seven or eight mouths to supply from my iars: and of the wild animals which Khaled and

his two companions expected to shoot, not one appeared, and thus before the close of another day they began to look rather blankly in each others' faces; and Khaled was expostulated with so frequently and so angrily that he lost his temper, and then one of them reined up his camel, saying,—

"Khaled, return; it is not yet too late. Remember that Abu Beer, whose words never fall to the ground, warned us that we were not departing in a happy hour or under a fortunate star."

"The Seyd Abu Beer has the ears of an ass," said Ibn Khobaid, passionately; "the well of the Sultan Selim is not many leagues from us, and we shall soon reach it. Return if thou wilt, but remember that he who retreats without accomplishing that which he hath undertaken, is a white-livered coward. If thou fearest the Mahrahs, return."

"I fear nothing, for I have not, like thee, wives and little ones," retorted the Arab, calmly.

Khaled hung his head in silence at this quiet reply.

"Lead on," resumed the other; "wheresoever thou goest, Khaled Ibn Khobaid, there will I go too; for though I fear the lack of water and the Syrian wind, I fear nothing else. Lead on, and if we perish, on thy soul be the sins we have not yet repented."

After this dispute the murmurs ceased, and in dogged silence we all proceeded to reach the well of the Sultan Selim, half suffocated by the increasing heat and that agonizing thirst which we could not alleviate, as the camels did, by gurgling water from their stomachs into their throats. On—on we rode; no track before us, and we left none behind. We were now in Roba-el-Khali, *the Abode of Emptiness*, with all its empty horror; the wild waste, the dreary, boundless, and immense solitude of sand that rose into dry waves, and hills, or columns, which whirled at the horizon like waterspouts. Every object seemed to vibrate and quiver in the rays of the meridian sun, and the state of the atmosphere made me think that the ignition of a lucifer-match would be sufficient to set all nature in a blaze. I feared my brain would boil or burst, and conjured Khaled to have pity, in the name of his Prophet, and by the memory of all that holy personage had endured on his celebrated march to Tabûc, when his troops were driven to such extremities by heat, that two soldiers divided one date between them, and ten men rode one camel by turns, and thereafter slew it to drink the water from its stomach; by all this, I begged him to lend me some covering for my head, but he spat in my face, and rode sullenly on. Then one of his companions drew a shawl from his girdle and threw it to me; and thankfully I wound it round my burning head, and spread the ends over my half-roasted shoulders.

In the desert every object became magnified to my unpractised and overstrained eye. Afar off I saw before us something that appeared to be a caravan, and a glow of hope that I might be

delivered arose within me; but, alas! on approaching, it proved to be only a flock of vultures, which rose into the air. In the same manner, a small plant, when espied from a distance, became magnified into a shrub, and on another occasion, a little shrub appeared like a large tree.

About meridian, we passed a low line of rugged rocks which rose like a flinty reef above this sandy sea; still, there no water welled, and no cooling breeze swept past to purify the atmosphere; nothing came but the hot wind like the breath of a destroying angel, beneath whose passage all things had shrunk and died. At the foot of these rocks lay the skeleton of a man, and the bony remains of a dromedary, with fragments of its shrivelled hide, all bleached to the whiteness of ivory under the fierce Arabian sun, after the jackal and hyæna had left them. My ~~male~~ soon became mad by thirst, and being quite unmanageable, was abandoned. I was then forced to travel entirely on foot, and my bodily agony increased with every step. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, red lights danced before me, and I began to reflect whether death at the hands of Khaled was not preferable to the protraction of such misery.

Once I imagined that water lay before me! It seemed a large and placid lake, with low and pale green shrubbery skirting its bosom, that gleamed like a sheet of polished steel beneath the clear bright sun. I pointed to it with joy; but the Arabs smiled grimly at me, for their more practised eyes saw only the desert, heated by the rays of the sun, and they knew that it was *the mirage*—that most tantalizing of all optical delusions; thus, when we approached that delicious sheet of water which seemed to roll over the horizon, it appeared to recede further and further, till I found it was only the parched plain, and then the phantom lake hovered at the horizon that lay beyond.

I remembered to have read that in one part of Arabia there is a tract of desert, measuring six hundred miles each way, without a single fountain of water. A hundred stories of travellers who had perished in that desert recurred to my mind, and there was one which was ever before me. It is related, I think, by Hackluyt, of a rich merchant who gave 10,000 ducats for a small cup of water in the desert, and yet perished of thirst with the man who had sold it; and thereafter the bones of both lay bleaching side by side, with the bright ducats glittering as if in mockery among them.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE PATH OF THE DESERT.

THOUGH this was the season which the Arabs consider winter, or nearly so, the heat of the desert after the recent rains was beyond all description suffocating. Khaled, who rode somewhat in advance of

us, uttered an exclamation of satisfaction, for his camel suddenly increased its speed to a rapid trot, a sure sign that we were approaching vegetation; and soon after, indeed, we saw some trees, for wherever there is verdure there is sure to be water, as the instinct of those animals teaches; so I pushed on with eagerness and my captors with joy, for the agonies of our thirst now seemed unquenchable!

We soon discerned a small spot of vegetation which appeared like a green isle amid the sea of scorched and scorching sand; a little grove of date trees shaded it on one side, and a barrier of basaltic rocks on the other sheltered it from the south-west—the quarter of the hot Syrian wind—and at their base was built a rough stone tank for the benefit to passing travellers and caravans. We reached it about sunset, and all rushed forward to the brink, and then uttered one simultaneous cry of despair.

The well was dry!

The strong hot breeze of the desert, by drifting the sand, had half-choked up the fountain, and its leathern bucket and rope lay cracked and dried by the heat, which was so intense that most of the leaves had fallen from the trees, and their bark was burst and rent, for the face of the white rocks had reflected the fiery rays of the sun with redoubled force, since the rains had cleared the atmosphere, and this small oasis in the desert was dying fast and decaying away.

Khaled now hastily selected a camel which was of least value, removed its packages to the backs of the other two, and after asking pardon of the Prophet for the cruel necessity which compelled him to act thus, drew a pistol from his girdle and deliberately shot it dead. The ponderous animal fell heavily to the earth, and in a moment its stomach was cut open, and the water it contained was carefully received into one of the leathern bottles which had been slung on my abandoned mule, but which I had been since compelled to carry. This nauseous draught was drunk with avidity by the thirsty Arabs, and then Khaled handed the small remainder of it, about a wine-glassful, to me, and I am assured that had I not obtained it, so great was my suffering, I could not have survived another hour.

Before I received it the three Arabs muttered one to another, and handled their muskets in a manner that was full of awful import to a poor, unarmed man; but their better feelings for a moment prevailed, and the water was yielded with undisguised reluctance to "the Kafir."

"Abu Beer foresaw that this well would be dry," said an Arab, gloomily, as we seated ourselves on the pale green withering grass.

"I care not for the Seyd," said Khaled, sulkily, while regarding his slaughtered camel; "I put my trust in Allah."

"He loves not those who are over-hardy or over-courageous, and thou, Khaled, hast been both. Oh! may the Holy Prophet have mercy on us all, not excepting even this poor infidel."

"In an evil hour we set forth," said the other Arab, "and now our stars are no longer in the ascendant."

"But it is now too late to return," said Khaled, angrily; "let us rest here, and push on to-morrow, and about noon, Inshallah, we shall reach our fort."

Night came on with its chill atmosphere. A fire was lighted by snapping a pistol and piling on the match some branches torn from the date trees; a steak was cut from the tough flank of the dead camel; it was broiled upon the embers and eaten without salt, and without a drop of any liquid to wash it down; but fortunately, as we reposed that night under the date trees and dwarf bushes, the dew fell so heavily that a small pool was collected in the hollow of the rocks, and I had no less than *two* copious draughts of it before my tormentors were awake, for now, having no fear of my escape, they all slept soundly. The remainder of this little pool was placed in one of the leathern jars, and I was, of course, forced to convey it. In the spot where I had lain the wild thistles grew in great numbers, but small and meagre were their prickly leaves, and as I turned them over with my thin and wasted hand I thought sadly of my home, my country, far away; and I could have wept like a child, but for very shame before the taunting Arabs.

After prayers, but long before sunrise, they prepared to depart; but misfortune seemed to dog the avaricious Khaled, for now a camel was found totally unable to move, having been already overtaken and overladen, and the Arabs know but too well that when this faithful servant cannot rise, and its breath comes slow and heavily, that its labours are at an end. Its packages were at once transferred to the third, and last; and then we all proceeded on foot, abandoning to its fate the poor animal which lay beside its slaughtered companion, and gazed mournfully at us as we departed; for the Mahomedan law forbids the destruction of any living thing, save to prolong the life of man; and we had not gone a hundred yards, when a long line of vultures that came—Heaven only knows from where, passed over our heads, and settling down upon the two animals, proceeded to tear them to pieces, the living and the dead, with their ravenous beaks and talons.

Leading his remaining camel by the bridle, with a lance on his shoulder and a matchlock in his hand, the gloomy Khaled Ibn Khobaid led us once more towards the horrid desert.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE PILLARS OF SAND.

As the morning grew apace, the Arabs remarked, with alarm, that the sun did not rise with its usual brilliance, and we soon became aware of a sulphurous odour in the atmosphere, and a lurid redness.

in the south-west quarter of the sky. The keen sense of hearing peculiar to all savages enabled Khaled (whom I considered little better than one,) to detect the approach of something yet unseen. He blew his match, and adjusted his weapons, but soon after a troop of wild horses, of that peculiar breed which the Bedouins hunt for food, and take by means of traps hidden in the sand, passed us like a whirlwind. Their manes, long, loose, and never touched by a human hand, waved on their necks like curling smoke; their eyes shot fire, and, straining every muscle, nerve, and energy, they swept on, diminished to specks, and vanished in the remote wastes beyond the blue horizon.

They were flying before the south-west wind! In the winter season this is always insupportable in those deserts, and by the time it reaches Mecca, after having passed over the mighty waste of burning sand, is nearly as bad as the simoom, for at times a single gust will suffocate both men and horses.

A thin and subtle dust filled the air, and the increased heat of the atmosphere rendered distension of the lungs almost impossible; thus our breathing became short and difficult.

A storm in the desert was at hand, yet my three captors marched doggedly on, with all the solemn apathy of Orientals, who confidently believed, as the Koran teaches, that the *destiny* of each man was bound unto his neck; that if they were to escape the dangers of the waste, and reach the great oasis, where their fortress stood, it was the will of Heaven; and if they were to perish, it was also the will of Heaven, and there was an end of it; for they confidently believed it was as impossible to add one hour to the allotted term of human life as to add one inch to their stature, by any art that cunning could devise. They smiled grimly, as a cry of astonishment and alarm escaped me, for now the greatest terrors of the desert arose before us.

In the south-west quarter of the heavens, I saw three mighty columns of sand arise from the bosom of the plain; they wavered and vibrated, as their vast bulk was agitated and borne on *towards us* with a speed which the swiftest racer could not have outrun. The sky seemed to darken as they approached, towering between us and the sun, and casting three long purple shadows across the yellow sand—shadows that had no termination but at the horizon—while the sun itself added to their mysterious terrors by giving them the hue and aspect of stupendous pillars of fire alternating between purple, gold, and russet-brown; and now a rushing, hissing sound swept over the sea of sand, as if the whole earth was passing away with them.

On, on they came, these terrible phenomena, apparently about a mile apart, but rushing straight towards us.

The poor camel planted his fore-feet firmly in the sand, and thrust his head and nostrils as far down into it as possible, refusing to advance a step, and in vain did Khaled drag him by the bridle and prick

his flanks with a lance. One of the Arabs became frantic with terror, and rent his turban, crying,

"Malediction on thee, Khaled Ibn Khobaid, for thou hast destroyed us; and on that day when seventy thousand chains, each dragged by seventy thousand angels, shall drag all Hell to the presence of the Prophet, may he judge between thee and us!"

"May your mothers suckle devils," growled Khaled, looking after the two, who, by an impulse they could not resist, fled to a distance—a hundred yards or so—to avoid the columns of sand; but, lo! one of these suddenly changed its direction, and poured all its strength and volume upon the very place they occupied, and in a moment buried them for ever, under a mound which fifty men could not have cleared in many, many hours. A cry of horror burst from me, and I sprung towards it, dragging Khaled by the girdle, and saying,

"Let us save them if we can!—quick—quick!"

"Poor Kafir!" he answered, sullenly, "in another moment thou wilt thyself be in the flames of Al Sirat."

But still I dragged him away, and we had not gone twenty paces when there was an awful hissing in my ears—a whirlwind of sand and darkness swept around us, as one column passed away over the desert, and the third entombed the heavily-laden camel, upon whom it discharged all its strength, and whose load of plunder had brought Ibn Khobaid on this disastrous journey.

So great was the sense of suffocation for some minutes, that I thought we would have expired upon the spot, where we had fallen flat with our faces on the hot sand. But now the last of these terrors had passed into the wilderness; the sun shone out clearly, and I turned to Khaled, who stood between the two mountains of sand, gazing at them by turns, as he leaned on his matchlock, and knew not under which of the pyramids his camel lay, and under which his kinsmen—both were so exactly alike. I thought there was a little motion in one of them, but it must have been fancy, or caused only by the last eddy of the fine sand whirling as it settled on the summit of the mound.

"Thou hast saved my life," said Khaled, in a husky voice; "but of what value is it now? for under that sand, which none but a geni could move, lie two of my bravest kinsmen and all my wealth! It was the will of God, and Mahomed is his Prophet."

He trembled in every limb; he was ghastly pale, for strange to say, the hot air of the desert had affected him even more than it did me. Now we were alone, and as I surveyed Khaled I remembered all the insults and humiliations to which he had subjected me. Two of my tyrants had perished.

"Ibn Khobaid," said I, with a gloomy smile, "if one more pillar of sand comes this way, I may find myself free."

"Thou art not yet free," he answered, levelling his matchlock at me; "for having lost all else, makes me value now my slave the

more. Nay, stand back," he cried, with savage energy, perceiving that I was about to rush upon him; "if I shatter your legs by a bullet, you will be devoured alive by the same vultures that tore my camels to pieces this morning, and which, from afar, are doubtless now scenting us as the *next* victims; and, by the soul of the Prophet, and the bones of Khobaid, my father, I will fire, if you advance but the breadth of a hair towards me."

The match smoked, and his right eye glared as he closed the left, and took deliberate aim at me. Under these circumstances and after such a threat, to advance would have been madness. I could only shake my clenched hand in his face, and inwardly resolve to *hyde* my time, as we say in Scotland, for I felt assured that my time of retribution would soon come now.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE LAST DROP OF WATER.

To keep me still more in subjection, this cruel Arab snatched up and slung over his own shoulder the large leathern water-bottle which I had relinquished during the passage of the sandy columns, and pointing significantly to his loaded musket and pistol, compelled me to advance before him across the desert in the direction which he indicated, as being that which led to the great oasis. Both of us had become weak and faint, and I could foresee that, unless this oasis was nearer than he imagined, we would never be able to reach it. The loss of his friends, camels, and plunder had disheartened Khaled, and deprived him of his wonted energy; he staggered as he walked forward over the soft white sand, on which the hot tropical sun cast our shortened shadows; and I believe it might have proved no difficult task to have closed with him, struck him down, and secured his weapons.

Such ideas frequently occurred to me; but what good purpose would such a victory have served? Far from civilized men—in the wild desert—and ignorant of the path which led either back to fertile Yemen, or into the boundless waste which lies between Mecca and Oman, measuring six hundred miles each way, I would have been nearer death alone than while under his hateful guidance and authority.

Afar off we saw what I conceived to be a grove of trees, and shortly before sunset we reached the spot to find only a clump of dwarf bushes growing amid the yellower sand; and here Khaled, on reaching a landmark which showed that we were further from his infernal oasis than he had hitherto believed, flung down his spear and musket in a gust of very unoriental passion, and seated himself with the water-jar between his knees. He took a long draught of the more than tepid liquid it contained; and when I approached to ask

"a mouthful," he warned me back by a cocked and brandished pistol, saying,—

"Back, Kafir, back! for there is only *one mouthful left*; and if thou art athirst it will only give thee a foretaste of the hell that awaits thee!"

I controlled my rising passion by a desperate effort, and retiring to the eastern or shady side of the dwarf bushes, threw myself on the sand, and bit my lips in the agony of my thirst, as, closing my eyes, I strove to forget it in sleep; and perhaps it was fortunate that, to restore my wasted strength for a time, a short uneasy slumber sealed my eyes—a slumber haunted by alternate seas of sand and water, where stupendous columns and spouts towered and wavered about me.

I must have slept, I suppose, about two hours, when a shrill and startling cry of terror, such as can only come from an Arab throat, awoke me, and I sprang to my feet. The sun was setting, and half his mighty disc, red as blood, was sunk below the level horizon. The shadows of the dwarf-shrubs and of my own figure were thrown to a vast distance across the silent plain, which was soon to darken under the deeper shadows of night.

On hastening round to where I had left Khaled, my captor, master, or tormentor—which you please, for he partook of that triple character—I shall not easily forget the new scene of terror I beheld.

Khaled had fallen asleep, and on wakening, found that an enormous serpent of the most deadly kind had wound one of its coils around his body; the rest of its scaly length was hidden in the bush near which he lay; but its round head was within two feet of his face. Its glistening eyes fascinated him and froze the blood in his heart, while the hot poisonous breath that was emitted by its open mouth, from which there projected a sharp tongue that quivered like a pointed flame, was almost sufficient to suffocate him. In limb and action, in thought and deed, the ferocious Khaled Ibn Khobaid was powerless now, and paralysed as if transformed to stone. His eyes were fixed, his jaws relaxed, and his usually brown visage had become a ghastly blue.

For a moment I was equally powerless; but snatching up the matchlock by which my life had been so frequently menaced, I took a steady and deliberate aim at the head of this monstrous reptile, which was suddenly erected nearly four feet high, while its eyes absolutely blazed with yellow light—a baleful lustre, that seemed the very spark of hell, as it prepared to spring at me.

I fired! The large bullet of the matchlock blew its scaly head to pieces, and the huge snake, unwinding itself from Khaled, lashed, wriggled, and writhed for some minutes, on the sand, before the nervous life within it died.

A considerable time elapsed before Khaled recovered sufficiently to thank me, which, after turning his face towards Mecca, and praying devoutly, he did in a voice so weak and tremulous, that I

feared assistance had come too late, and that the hideous reptile had bitten him. He held out his hand to me, saying, in a low voice,—

"Forgive me, O Christian, for having brought thee to die in this unsainted desert! Thou hast touched me to the soul by saving me, when another would have left me to perish. May all who have hated and misused thee, as I have done, die—helpless, friendless, and alone, as I now die! I have no reward to offer—none but this *drop of water*—the mouthful I refused thee only three hours ago! Drink—drink! but of what use is it? Thou must die ere another day goes down, and die without finding the burial which I implore thee to bestow on me. Oh, lay me in my last home, with my feet towards the blessed Kebab!"

These words had a terrible echo in my heart, and I contemplated with horror and awe the prospect of being left alone in that mighty wilderness. I implored Khaled to take courage; all my anger at his previous cruelty and tyranny had passed away; sympathy and fear—selfish fear, perhaps—alone remained; and stooping over him on my knees, I raised his head, and held the camel-skin jar to his lips; but he thrust it aside, and said, while his eyes became glazed,—

"Thou disdainest this offer—more valuable *here* than the pearls of paradise?"

"Not a drop shall touch my lips!"—(for the moment my own thirst was forgotten.)

"Drink—I tell thee—drink!"

"Never!" I exclaimed.

"Then let the earth again receive it," he said, and poured the priceless liquid on the greedy sand; and with wolfish eyes I saw it vanish there for ever.

After a pause I again heard the voice of Khaled: he was repeating the short hundred and thirteenth chapter of the Koran, in low, broken, and sad accents.

"I fly for refuge unto the Lord of the Daybreak, that he may deliver me from the mischief of those things which he hath created, and from the mischief of the night when it cometh on, and from the mischief of women blowing on knots, and from the mischief of the envious and wicked."

After a few more indistinct mutterings, he turned his face from me towards Kebab (*i.e.* towards Mecca), and expired.

The red sun had gone down; dark night was at hand, and I was alone on the plain, in that "unsainted desert," with no companion but the dead!

CHAPTER LXXVI.

ALONE!

HE had no wound that I could perceive; thus, whether he had died from the pressure of the serpent, or under the influence of its poisonous breath, of fear, of fatigue, or from the combined effect of all four, I know not; but he was dead, and then, indeed, I was *free*. But oh, what a freedom!

Without guidance, food, or companionship, I was alone in that great desert, which is yet, and ever will be, a blank upon the map of Arabia!

I possessed myself of the dead man's arms and ammunition, after which, with the butt of his matchlock, I hollowed a grave to receive him, drew the red turban over his face, and as I covered him up, without ever considering whether his head or his feet were towards Mecca, I piled high over him the soft sand, which I knew too well the jackals and vultures would soon tear away. Then his words occurred to me, with a fearful and awful import, when he warned me that I should die in the desert, *without finding even the burial which he implored me to bestow on him!*

When this melancholy task was over, I withdrew a little from the mound of white sand, and sat down to consider my situation and the course to pursue.

Chaos—chaos! all my thoughts were chaos!

The sun had set; the western sky was flushed with saffron blent with fiery red, while the east was all of the deepest and darkest blue. In that direction the desert resembled a pale and darkening sea; to the west, its horizon presented a hard black level line. To hope that I could find my way alone, without food, water, or guides, to the distant kingdom of Yemen, was nearly as vain as the idea of discovering the nearer oasis of the Bedouins, towards which Khaled had been conveying me.

Yesterday, I had justly the most intense and malignant horror of him; to-day I felt sorrow for his death, and would have given the world to restore his life, for the Arabs are ever grateful, and after saving him from the serpent, he might have become my friend. I wearied myself with futile wishes and endless conjectures, while the light grew fainter in the distant west, and turned from red to pallid yellow, while the twinkling stars came one by one out of the deep blue sky.

There was perfect twilight still, and distinctly as at noon I could perceive the dwarf bushes, the dead serpent, and the grave of Khaled.

Had its folds been entwined round *me*, how different might have been my fate!

Three little antelopes passed near me; I envied their speed and lightness, as they glided like shadows over the soft yielding sand, and my very soul seemed to follow them—the only living objects; and when they vanished into obscurity I felt more than ever lonely. As on a previous occasion, I endeavoured to consider whether it could be possible that I was not altogether changed, or whether it was that my past life or my present misery was a dream, and whether I was actually the same man who, a few weeks before, commanded the third company of "the Queen's Own," and had about me the daily routine of a gay barrack—the luxury, brilliance, and comfort of the mess-table and all the appurtenances of civilized life; whether Cecil Marchmont was not a myth, and whether I had not been always a naked slave to the Arabs—the toy of cruelty and oppression.

Around me there stirred no sound that the finest ear could detect, for there reigned the oppressive stillness of night—the silence of the grave and of utter solitude; nor bird nor insect were to be seen, nothing but that dark, boundless, and unbroken ocean of arid sand which resembled the debris of a mighty furnace, or as I have said before, the bed of an ancient sea.

As the night drew on, there came with it a soft warm wind, but alas! no friendly dew to allay my deadly thirst. The moon arose, and the shadows of the dwarf bushes were thrown for miles along the desert. Her yellow disc was now nearly full, and as it heaved up slowly, it reminded me of the honest harvest moon I had so often seen at home rising above the green hills of Lauder, when I was a little child, and when the same moon shone through the windows of the quiet manse in the glen of Aikendean. The moon seemed still the same as then; but how changed was I, in face, in form, in circumstances and locality.

Father and mother, brothers and sisters—all whom I loved and who had loved me well, were lying side by side in the auld kirkyard, where perhaps the same moon that lit this sandy solitude, was now casting the shade of many a yew and sauch tree on their quiet graves. And my poor lost Cecil, her sad eyes were ever before me with their last look of sorrow and unfathomable despair!

I buried my wan face in the sand, bowing before the tempest of terrible thoughts that seemed to sweep over me, even as the poor camel buries his head in the same dusty soil to escape the fierce Syrian blast—the shamiel of Arabia.

The wind of the pathless waste—such a wilderness as that where Hagar laid her Ishmael down to die—brought to my ear a low soft murmur. It sounded like distant voices; they were the accents of those I had known in other years—voices long since hushed for ever—and then their dear faces came before me, but all wavering and indistinct, yet I felt this growing delirium a luxury.

I thought I must soon die, for thirst was rendering me fatuous, and I felt myself speaking aloud, laughing and weeping alternately.

I heard the murmur of water, and it seemed to be the "bumme!" of the old burn that flowed near my father's manse, and I saw the deep dark corrie, where the water was so cool and pure, and where I had often fished for minnows with a string and luggie when a child, and for the good bull-trout when a youth; and I felt the shadow of the heavy green oaks that grew by the kirk-yard wall. Again I heard the voices of the village children, as they rang in the wooded hollow, the clink of the blacksmith's anvil and the jangle of the dominie's bell, with all the sounds of home.

Then came the laughter and fun of the mess-room, and the rattle of the drums for duty; the swaying of a ship at sea, the voices of Cecil and poor Fred Langley, all woven up with a thousand other visions; but through all and above all were the awful sense of loneliness and *thirst!*

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE BELIEVER AND THE INFIDEL.

I HAVE dwelt so long on my own adventures that it seems time to relate something of those who have borne a prominent part in my story or narrative.

Now it happened that poor Fred Langley was neither dead nor buried, nor eaten by the jackals under the ramparts of the Arab fort, and however much this announcement may astonish my readers, I beg to assure them that the circumstance of his being in the land of the living puzzled me much more when I afterwards became aware of it.

The whole of those terrible hours during which I had fancied his body was decaying before me were purely imaginary, being the result of fever and the excitement I had undergone, for on finding him as they believed dead, Osman Oglou had ordered the Arabs to unfetter and fling him over the castle wall. This was the very means of saving him. He fell into a soft mossy swamp, about thirty feet below, where the yielding verdure and withered grass saved him from injury, while the coolness of the night revived him; but he knew not here he was—how he came there, or why he was unchained and separated from me. Above him, on one side rose the dark solid outline of the Arabian castle, with its high round Turkish towers; on the other stretched a forest and a chain of rocky mountains, upon the brows of which the waning moon shone faint and coldly.

He was so weak as to be totally incapable of walking, but the thought of Amina urged him to exertion, and thus he crept on his hands and knees to the edge of the salt marsh, and reached the small horse-path that led round it to the gate of the fort. Here, overcome by indecision and excessive debility, he sunk upon his face, and lay

in a species of swoon, or waking dream, amid which he perceived a turbaned figure mounted on a high-trotting dromedary glide past like a shadow or a spirit.

Fred's body stretched on the pathway caught the eye of the rider, a wild-looking man clad in skins and a keffie of linen, with a voluminous white beard round his visage, and bearing in his hand a heavy club studded with iron spikes.

"Ahi—halloo—a Frank! whose dog art thou, that lie thus in the path of my pilgrimage? speak!" said this personage, as he dismounted, placed his hand upon the head and heart of Langley, and finding him alive, added, "it is one of the Kafirs who came to my cell with Kior, the Abdala! what a plight—naked, cold, dying, perhaps; speak—dost thou not remember me?"

Fred turned his eyes slowly upon the interrogator, but had not the strength to reply.

"Chut! I am the old Haji Nouredin who dwells at the foot of yonder granite mountains. I am the Regenerator of the Faith," he added, fiercely swinging his club aloft, "he who has sworn to wade knee-deep in the blood of the Faringis and infidels. But by the salt of the sultan I must succour thee, or my face would be black with shame. I must preserve the ties of salt and hospitality. Canst thou not rise?"

Langley signed with his hand that it was impossible.

"Poor Kafir! it is strange the small amount of life with which it has pleased God to gift these infidels."

The santan, who was returning to his cell, after visiting a shrine or tomb that stood a few miles distant, now seemed to pause, as if reflecting whether it was worth while to trouble himself further about a miserable Faringi, for he supposed that Fred was dying; but his better feelings obtained the mastery.

"Barek Allah! well, well, on that great day when the multitudes of the earth will be scattered like moths upon the blast, and when those hills of solid granite will roll away, as the Prophet said, like *carded wool* upon the wind, one Kafir saved, more or less, will not blacken a hair in the beard of Nouredin; so, Barek Allah! say I, and praise be to His only Prophet, that I found thee! Thy star shines out, and my fortune is great that enables me to succour and protect thee."

With these words, this strange old man, who seemed endued with more than natural strength, lifted Langley up, and placed him between the humps of his dromedary as easily as if he had been a girl; but then, poor Fred's limbs were wasted and attenuated by toil and illness. The santan stripped off his warm fur barracan, and placed it over the bare shoulders of my friend, and desiring him to hold fast by the pommel of the saddle, lest he might fall off and kill himself, he took the bridle in his left hand, shouldered his ponderous club, and led the way down a dark, narrow, and wooded gorge, towards his dwelling at the foot of the mountains. From time to time he

looked round to see if Langley was still keeping his saddle, and muttered many a word of kindness and encouragement, mingled with apologies to himself, for departing so far from the tenour of his life and his strict line of religious duty, as to save from destruction one hair of a Kafir's head.

"Friend infidel," said he, in the darkest part of the gorge, where, as the moon had sunk, the woods were black as ebony, "take heed, for here the path is both steep and dangerous. Good—good; thou sittest my dromedary bravely. Let us only reach the Cave of the Sleeper, and then we may laugh at the sultan's beard. But why do I take all this trouble for an enemy of Heaven, a foe of the Prophet, and a mocker of his miracles—one whose guilt rendereth yet blacker the Holy Kaaba?" He gave his mace a furious swing, and then added, "But it is revealed, that it is good in the Prophet's sight to free the poor captive, to feed the hungry in the day of famine, to protect the orphan who is without kindred, and to raise the poor man who lieth on the ground. Yea, and this poor Kafir hath been a captive; he may be hungry and an orphan, and he was lying on the ground. The ninetieth chapter is right; Inshallah! be joyful, for here is the end of the pass, and yonder light burneth in my dwelling; thou art safe, O nakib, and may the ashes of evil be heaped on the beards of thine enemies!"

A few minutes after, they reached the wicker-work door of the cavern, in which the eccentric hermit, or santan, had made his dwelling; there he assisted Langley to dismount, and led him in, after which he carefully groomed and duly stabled his dromedary, the fatiguing trot of which had nearly shaken the sickly rider to pieces.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE NEW HOPE.

WHEN Nouredin returned, he found Fred stretched in a state of partial insensibility on a bed of skins, which lay in a corner of the grot; the latter was still—as when he saw it last—lighted by an iron cruise that hung from the roof, and it had the tattered green veil, or curtain, spread before its little sanctuary.

The santan laid aside his club of murderous aspect, and hovered about the sick man, chafing his thin temples and wasted hands with certain cooling essences from roots and flowers, of which his long residence in the wild places of "Araby the Blest" had given him an ample knowledge.

He then entreated, and ultimately forced Fred to swallow a thin cake of dhourra and a decoction of milk, honey, and other simple things, which were calculated to restore his wasted strength, with many kind words of consolation and encouragement, muttering ever and anon, his absurd but ferocious regrets, that he—the Lamp of

Religion and acknowledged Regenerator of the Faith—should thus foster and protect a foe of the Prophet—a Faringi of Aden.

"Eat, eat, poor Kafir," said he, while his quick, small eyes twinkled under their shaggy brows, which were as white as his flowing beard; "eat and drink to restore thy health, which hath been sorely wasted in the hands of those unblest Yemenees; eat, and restore it, or ere long thou mayest have the hammers of Munkir and Nakir about thine ears."

"These demons cannot be more cruel than the Arabs from whom I have escaped, and who, perhaps, have left my friend to perish."

"Perish—perhaps so, for Kafirs die easily; but what shouldst thou know about Munkir and Nakir? Poor child of darkness and doubt—yet a time will come," continued the santan, whose eyes shot fire, while he swung his mace around his head. Fred was too ill to smile at the energy of the santan, but he shook his head mournfully.

"Thou doubttest it," said he, with a grimace; "well, well, I shall not be angry with thee. Poor unbeliever, how shouldst thou be able to understand such things, when we know not how the giant ostrich springs from a little egg, or a stately tree from a grain of seed in the earth."

Fred gave a moan of sadness and impatience.

"What aileth thee, now?" asked the santan, whose style of language, as he was a mountaineer of Yemen, approached nearer to that of the Koran than any other Arabic, and who, although he meant to do well, was not exactly the kind of physician to soothe one whose mind was perhaps more afflicted than his body—"Speak; I would to Paradise that I could bring the father of all doctors to thee!"

"If you would restore to me a dear being whom I have lost, doubtless for ever, I think, good santan, I would soon be well and whole."

"A dear being?" pondered the haji. "Now, what manner of ware can he mean? Doth the Kafir laugh at my white beard? Is it thy better angel thou hast lost?"

"Yes—yes, santan," said Fred, turning bitterly on his bed of leaves, "and so my heart is like to burst—dear, dear, Amina?"

"What—Amina?" said the santan, with anger and contempt; "is it a woman thou regrettest so bitterly? Now, may the fathers of all Faringis be burned, for their sons are fools."

"Amina, the sister of the brave Mohamed-al-Raschid, Emir of the Abdali—oh, can you tell me aught of her?"

"Tell thee aught—no, I never knew much about women, even when I was a youth; then how should I be able to tell thee about this one now, when my beard is white as the snows of Kaf? Praise God, Noureddin hath other matters to think of! Am I a dog, to run at women's tails?"

"Good santan, excuse me; I am weak, powerless, ill—but the woman I love, and who loves me well, is lost—lost here, in this

land of Yemen, and I could almost worship you, if you could restore her to me."

"Worship me?" replied the literal santon; "whose dog art thou, to demean thyself so far to a poor mortal like Nouredin? Worship me—the holy Prophet forbid! And thou hast lost her among the Yemenees; that is like losing a pinch of salt in the sea. Well, listen to me: take courage *and she shall yet be found!* Dost thou hear that?"

"I do—I do," said Fred, raising himself on his elbow.

"Dost thou believe me?" asked the santon, fixing his keen and fiery eyes upon him.

"Implicitly," said poor Fred, whose failing hope made him gladly clutch, as a drowning man might, at straws.

"It is well; doubt of Nouredin had destroyed thee, for his words never fall to the ground like withered leaves. He never makes a promise which he cannot fulfil. Well, go to sleep, nakib, and dream of this Amina; sleep soundly and long, it may shorten the term of separation. I go to prayer; farewell, and mayest thou slumber soundly as the Seven Sleepers, but wake to a more joyful day."

With these words this strange old man retired behind his green curtain, and appeared no more that night.

Left to his own reflections, Fred's thoughts were, of course, full of Amina, of Cecil, and me, from whom his separation seemed at that time wholly incomprehensible. He pondered on the words and promises of his eccentric host, and while analysing the amount of dependence to be put upon the announcement that Amina would be restored to him, he fell into one of those deep slumbers which long toil, illness, and overwhelming lassitude can only procure.

The simples of the Santon Nouredin, and the hopes of discovering Amina so judiciously afforded by that deep-witted old haji, had an effect so beneficial on the mind and frame of Fred Langley, that the morning of the second day found him seated on the turf at the door of the grotto, watching the wild swans floating on the pool in the wooded hollow, and the brightness of the clear and beautiful landscape, as the sun's warm rays poured down the shady gorge between the granite hills, tinting with a thousand prismatic hues the dewy leaves of the oak and walnut-tree, and the feathery foliage of the broad and graceful palms, while the grey partridge, the lark, and white crane were wheeling in the blue sky, and the wild coffee-plant mingled its fragrance with the perfume of a hundred flowers.

"Good santon," said he, imploringly, when that remarkable personage had concluded his long morning prayers, and was preparing a little repast of honey, milk, and cakes; "you have fifty times promised that Amina, the sister of Mohamed, would be restored to me."

"True; most true," mumbled Nouredin, under his thick beard,

which was white as the thistledown; "and for the fifty-first time I now recommend to thee—patience!"

"Have I not waited two whole days?"

"And what are two whole days?" asked the santan, suspending his culinary operations for a moment with an air of indignant surprise.

"They are two ages to a lover; but, forgive me, reverend haji."

"By the soul of the Prophet! thou mayest have to wait twenty years, and what are twenty years to a patient man? Therefore, I pray thee to be patient; but, alas! patience, like faith, is the sign of a true believer, and thou art but a poor Kafir, from the land where no sun ever shines; but God is great! and now thy breakfast is before thee."

Fred could only sigh with an impatience which the imperturbable santan did not deign to notice; and he began to fear that his host, being (as he already conjectured) slightly crazed, might have made these promises at random; and when this idea occurred to him, he grew sick at heart with despondency, and the consciousness that he was utterly unable to penetrate the mystery which shrouded the disappearance of Amina.

"Eat; eat, I tell thee," said the santan; "this day is thine own. Who can say to whom to-morrow may belong? It may be the day of others, and to thee but a portion of eternal night. Eat on; it is a good fashion, and old as the days of King Ad, the unblest pagan."

The appearance of Arabs in the gorge of the mountains descending to the santan's grot, frequently compelled his guest to seek refuge in the interior; and as these were generally shepherds and devotees who came to pray in the Cave of the Sleeper, Nouredin concealed himself behind his tattered green curtain, the veil of the sanctuary, through which he placed a foot for them to kiss. One of these visitors, a nude and half-mad Calendar, in a fit of delirium and religious fervour, being drugged with opium, very nearly discovered Fred, whom he might have slain with a hatchet which the Calendars always carry in their girdle; but as he roved round the grot, dancing and chanting the praises of Mahomed, he tore down the tattered screen, whereupon the Regenerator of the Faith lost all patience, and levelled him by one blow of his mace, crying, "Woe to thee, son of a burnt father!" Then springing off his perch, he lifted the Calendar on his back, and carrying him to the edge of the pool, there flung him down to recover as he might; and, soon after, the sobered devotee crawled away, imprecating curses upon the santan. The latter, after this occurrence, remained long in deep thought, and then throwing himself upon the floor, gathered dust, and heaped it on his head, saying,—

"I mocked thee, poor Kafir, for lacking patience, when I myself had none! It was the evil one, who came to tempt me in the form of a Calendar, even as he came in the form of Soraka Ibn Malee to

the men of the Koreish. Woe is me! I have blackened my face before the Prophet, and done that which is evil in his sight."

The santon regretted so bitterly the testy act of which he had been guilty, that he announced an intention of departing on a short pilgrimage to the tomb of a Rhufuis, which lay about thirty miles distant, and who, in his time, had been so exceedingly patient under all manner of mental and bodily mortification, that he was wont to sit with pieces of red-hot iron between his teeth until they grew cold as lead; and who for sixty years had always drunk water (when nothing better was to be had), and made innumerable vows of celibacy (but always for very limited periods), and when he died, was esteemed a paragon of Rhufuis.

Immediately on taking this resolution, he hastened to put it in execution, and after saddling his dromedary and giving Fred strict injunctions that he was not to venture beyond the grotto, lest he might be seen by some of the sultan's people; and, more than all, that he was not to penetrate behind the green curtain of the sanctuary, lest he might rouse the evil genii who dwelt in the bosom of the mountain, Nouredin perched himself between the humps of his high and uncouth charger, gave it a probe with the spikes of his mace, and departing up the valley, glided through the gorge like a shadow in the sunshine.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE VEIL OF THE SANCTUARY.

ON being left to his own reflections, Fred was not without just apprehensions of the danger that might accrue to him, if any of the half-insane and wholly fanatical wanderers and devotees, who usually visited the santon, should enter the grotto in his absence, and there discover a Faringi; but fortunately none came, and the evening closed, the sunlight faded from the hill-tops, and the palm branches began to droop as night stole along the wooded hollow, when Fred, feeling chill, lonely, and in the lowest spirits, retired to his couch of skins and leaves, to pass the dreary hours which he knew must intervene between the dusk and dawn. He had closed and secured the wicker door of the cell, and having no other protection against wild animals or wandering Bedouins but the supposed sanctity of the place, he longed exceedingly for a brace of pistols, or at least his sword, weak and faint though he was, as he crept into the fissure of the rocks which formed his bed-place, and strove to sleep. But the peculiarity of his position, his loneliness and desertion, together with the wild aspect of the cavern (now when he was its only inmate), banished repose, and raised a tumult of feverish and anxious thoughts.

From the roof of horizontal basalt, the smoky cruise of the santon

shed its flickering light on the tattered curtain of green—the sacred colour—which veiled the seat and altar of the sanctuary, and on the freakishly twisted and broken fragments, dark fissures and strong stony ribs or columns forming the sides of the grotto; and although Fred was much too matter-of-fact by his nature, country, and education, to fear either ghoules, gins, or Guebres, yet he was not without feeling a moderate share of anxiety on his own account, and an oppressive sense of loneliness as the night darkened in that voiceless solitude.

Pondering on what our merry mess and the regiment would be thinking of our double disappearance, Langley lay communing with himself upon his humble couch, and when just about to drop asleep, in the mere weariness of conjecture, the sound of a voice *within* the hermitage, and beyond the place where he lay, roused him at once to wakefulness.

Starting up, he listened, but all was silent.

Again it came to his ear, like the low and indistinct murmuring of one who speaks when asleep and dreaming. There could be no doubt it was the voice of a human being—of a female it would seem. Fred continued to listen, and as he heard the voice from time to time, breaking the solemn stillness of the place, he became more and more excited. The santan, he believed, would not return for some hours; so, rising, he approached the green curtain of the sanctuary and then paused, for the idea naturally occurred to him, "By what right do I penetrate the secrets of my host?"

The many stories which he had heard or read, and which detailed the hypocrisy of the eastern fakirs, dervishes, santons, and other religious mendicants, contrasting their days of poverty and piety in public with their nights of debauchery in secret, occurred to him, and increased a half malicious desire to unravel this new mystery, and discover the other occupant of the grotto; but by doing so he feared to excite the wrath of the half-crazed Haji Nouredin.

He drew back the curtain, and saw only a long stone bench, the bed of the ancient sleeper, on which stood a clay jar, filled, no doubt, with water from the holy Zemzem well, a rosary of beads, and a copy of the Koran, which lay upon a niche hewn into the rock. A narrow fissure or doorway through the grotto opened on the right side of this little keblah, and beyond it Langley could perceive the light of another lamp or taper shining, by reflection on the inner walls of rock. Through this opening he crept softly and cautiously, and penetrating into the interior, discovered a natural chamber of basalt, where a lamp of clay was burning, and were, surrounded by several coarse vases of freshly gathered flowers, a young Arab girl lay asleep on a pile of Hadramaut carpets or mats.

Her face was turned from him, and half-hidden by a mass of thick, black, wavy hair; but her figure was beautiful; anklets of gold were on her taper legs, and golden bangles adorned her wrist; her unconscious attitude was charming and full of youthful grace. A sudden

thought occurred to Langley, and his heart leaped, while his breath came short and thick, as tremblingly he knelt down by her side, and lifting up the heavy braids of hair from her sleeping face, exclaimed, in accents of astonishment and joy,—

“Amina! Amina!” and clasped her in his arms, for the pretty sleeper was indeed the lost sister of the emir.

Amina awoke, and overcome by mingled emotions of delight and terror, was on the point of swooning, for her sensitive heart was never meant by nature to bear those sudden shocks to which of late it had been so frequently subjected; and it was only when Langley called upon her in the most tender and endearing manner, that she became reassured, for the restoration of him she loved so deeply and so passionately, had come upon her in a manner so sudden and startling, that for a time the bewildered Langley repented his rashness and impetuosity. She gazed upon him, and then closed her eyes to open them and gaze again upon his well remembered features, and for a time she could scarcely be assured it was his kind and loving eye that turned to hers, and that it was himself, unscathed, unharmed, as tender and as true as ever, that clasped her to his heart!

A burst of tears relieved her, and she clung to his breast, sobbing and saying in broken accents,—

“Oh, when I lost you, I lost the light of my eyes, the joy of my soul! I have been in darkness, enduring all the terrors of death and the despair of Eblis! Oh, you know not all I have suffered, and all I have escaped from since that night of woe at Hesn-al-Mouhabib.”

She overwhelmed him with inquiries, but Langley would not tell a word of his adventures until he was informed by what miracle she came to be concealed in the cell of Noureddin; and this explanation, after we last left her entombed by the Guebres in a cave of the basaltic mountains, is very simple; for, after enduring all the terrors of death, and believing herself buried alive until the day of doom, like those on whom the enchanted seal of Solomon was set, for such was the simplicity and such the superstition of the unlettered Arab girl; after enduring both hunger and thirst, and finding that the most solemn, earnest, and heartfelt prayers availed her as little as her tears, she became a prey to hopelessness, and uttered the wildest cries, the echoes of which being increased by innumerable reverberations among the rocks, increased her terror. Around her all was buried in impenetrable darkness, and she believed she was just about to die, when a faint light glimmering far off began to steal upon her, and her terror became greater—her head swam round, her heart grew still; she feared the genii, or the ghoules, on whose abode the Guebres might have thrown her, were approaching, and her agitation ocame so great that, as the light came nearer and brightened, she lost all consciousness, and on recovering, found herself in the grotto of the Santon Noureddin, whom her cries had attracted.

“He has been most kind and good to your poor Amina,” she continued; “but, reading that scandal, from which even the holy Prophet

could not escape, when he was kind to his Egyptian handmaid, he insisted that I should remain in strict seclusion until he found you, or announced my safety to my brother, or our friend the old Sheikh Abdulmelik, which I gladly promised to do; and then, seeing that I was almost dying of weakness and with the terrible memory of all I had undergone, he gave me a draught of simples, which seemed potent as the phial of Lokman, for I recovered almost immediately, and have since been well and strong. Oh, the knowledge of Nouredin is miraculous! He knows all things, from the seeds of grass to the motion of the stars in heaven. Lokman, with all his learning, was a child to him! But you have not told poor Amina how you are restored to her (though the santan often promised that you would be so); nor have you told me why you are so strangely and so poorly clad in a coarse keffie and cap; and where is your friend, and where is his Frankish lady, who caused our separation? Alas! did they leave you to perish among your enemies?" she added, while her eyes sparkled at the idea, and she clung gracefully to Fred, with all the confidence of perfect love and joy.

He hastened to undeceive her, and related all that had happened to himself, from that evil moment when he left her at the tomb of Khassim up to the present time, so far as he knew; for one portion of his story—his separation from me—he had a very vague idea, and at that time could not account for it in any way, or for being found alone near the salt marsh by the Santon Nouredin.

"Oh!" said Amina, becoming pale with terror, "perhaps you have been dead?"

"Dead! why, I should think not," said Fred, somewhat perplexed; "how can you think of such a thing, when I am here, alive and well?"

"I do not know," replied Amina, pressing her hands upon her eyes; "but strange things happen in the world, and this santan, who knows everything, told me that his simples were powerful as those of Lokman."

"Who the deuce was he, Amina?"

"Hast thou never heard of Lokman?" asked Amina, in solemn astonishment, while her large oriental eyes dilated.

"Never, but from you."

"Oh, I forget you are but a Frank," said she, patting his head with her pretty hand.

"Nay, I am Fred," said Langley, kissing her, "and Heaven only knows where poor Frank is at this moment."

"Ah! I fear his place among us will long be vacant; yet God is great, and who can tell? But," she added, seeing a cloud was gathering on her lover's brow, "you must know that Lokman was a learned Arabian, who lived for *many centuries*, long ago, and thus acquired the knowledge of many lifetimes; yet he died at last, and when on his deathbed delivered to his son three phials of a liquor that sparkled purely and brightly as water, for it was distilled from fermented corn, and its power was said to be more potent than all

the physics of Geber and all the wines of Oman, and these phials he told him would bring the dead to life. His son preserved them with religious care, and when his own time came, he made a faithful Ethiopian promise to pour this wonderful liquid down his throat. This the poor trembling slave did punctually, and on receiving the first phial, the dead man cried '*Pour on,*' and the second was accordingly emptied into his mouth. Upon this, he opened his eyes and stretched forth his arms, to the great consternation of the Ethiopian, who fled in terror, and allowed him to die for want of the third phial, which was broken. Thus the precious liquor was lost, and none in Arabia have since discovered the secret of Lokman."

"If poor Frank Hilton, or his Scottish friend Rabd-al-Hoosi, were here, they would be very apt to call this precious liquor good Highland aqua vitæ," thought Langley, as he laughed at Amina's implicit belief in what she related; and as he caressed her, he forgot all the perils he had escaped, the sufferings he had undergone, the insults he had endured—and more than all, he forgot the strict injunctions of the absent santón, whose intentions, whatever they were, he had now completely frustrated by penetrating, as he had done, beyond the curtain of his altar—an act of sacrilege which not even a Mussulman had dared to have done.

Unconscious of the importance or guilt attached to this, honest Fred forgot all about it, and everything else, and gave himself up wholly to the delight of conversing with Amina, and listening to her prattle, till weariness overcame them. For there are times when people grow weary even amid happiness; and there, reclined against the piles of cushions, or folded carpets, they fell into a slumber with their arms around each other, and the beautiful round cheek of Amina reposed on Langley's breast.

CHAPTER LXXX.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

IN the land of dreams they heard not the rattle of the Arab drum, nor the clank of hoofs as a troop of horsemen rode down from a pass in the hills, and encircling the pool in the hollow, drew up near the door of the grotto; they heard neither the neighing of horses, the voices of men, nor their footsteps, as the santón and the Emir Mohamed, whom he had when met on his march towards Sana, with five hundred Abdala horsemen, entered the cavern, where a cry of astonishment burst from Nouredin on finding that Langley had disappeared. Then a sudden suspicion crossed his mind; his countenance darkened, his eyes shot fire, and grasping his iron-spiked club, he drew back the curtain of the altar.

"Holy Haji! where is my sister, and what dost thou suspect?" asked Mohamed in a whisper, as he held him back by the skirt of the keffie.

"It is a sacrilege," growled Nouredin; "and by the right hand of the Prophet on earth, I will fearfully avenge it. Woe to the hour I first broke bread and salt with the Faringis!"

They soon reached the inner grotto, where Amina lay asleep in the arms of Langley. To see his sister thus, and unveiled, with her cheek reposing on the breast of one of the accursed Franks, clouded with sudden anger the haughty brow of the emir, and arrested for a time the first impulse of affection, which had prompted him to rush forward and embrace her. He drew back, and regarded them with threatening eyes, while the santan grasped his terrible club, and pointed to them in silent rage.

"The violation of my sanctuary," he cried, with a loud voice, "must be punished, O emir! and in the blood of this Kafir, by the ninety-nine names of God, I swear to avenge it *thus*!"

He swung the club above the head of Langley; but the strong hand of Mohamed arrested the descending blow, the noise of which, as the club fell upon the rocks, together with the shrill cry of the santan, awoke the sleepers. Langley sprang to his feet and confronted them, while Amina leaped up like a fawn to embrace her brother; but he held her aloof at arm's length, and turned his face away to conceal the anger that struggled for mastery with his sad affectionate smile.

Standing in the grotto, which was partly dark and partly lighted by a streaming lamp, they formed a wild and picturesque group; the emir, with his glittering shirt of linked mail, his Arab shield, with its four golden bosses, his pistol, sword, and jambea, his swarthy visage and noble bearing; then the light and beautiful figure of Amina; and next, the savage aspect of the santan, half nude and half clad in his keffie and goat-skin, his hair and beard all mingling in a mass around his keen and dusky face, and his eyes that glared with passion and excitement. There was a pause for a few moments, during which nothing was heard but the fierce breathing of the santan, and then the soft voice of Amina, who wept and implored Mohamed, by all the memory of their old affection, to embrace her, as she clung to his outstretched arm; and during that pause Langley was not without some anxiety for the probable issue of the whole affair.

"Mohamed—my brother—speak to me," cried Amina; "oh, Mohamed, is it thus thou greetest me after all that I have endured, and after our long separation?"

"Alas, Amina," said the emir, through his clenched teeth, "thou lovest an unbeliever—a Kafir—a Faringi! Now, by Him who holds my soul in His hand, this wounds me more deeply than a poisoned arrow."

"Then why withhold my hand, emir?" cried the santan, furiously essaying to lift his club.

"Because I will never spill the blood of one who has eaten salt with my household," replied the emir—"nay, not even in battle; and I assure thee, O santan, the hour of battle is at hand."

"Well, be it so—Allah is great," grumbled the hermit, lowering his hideous mace; "there is a time for all things, and one will come when those Kafirs—those *Ingleez* at Aden—shall weep and say, when passing the graves of those who fall before them, 'Would to Heaven that *we* were in *thy* place, oh, dead!' Let us send among them beautiful women," continued the hermit, with a withering glance at Fred, "and posture-makers, even as the Midianites did at the request of the men of Moab, to provoke those of Israel to lasciviousness, and so lure them to destruction."

"Speak to Mohamed—oh, speak to him!" said Amina, imploringly, to Fred; "oh, after all I have endured, are we thus to be separated for ever?"

"The liver of the Frank is as white as his face," said the santan; "he has no tongue to speak either for himself or thee."

"This cannot be true," said the emir, scornfully; "no, no, Amina could never love any man who was not brave."

"I am the sister and the daughter of the Ab¹," said she, proudly and tearfully.

"And Mohamed, who is named *the Just* by all the tribes of Yemen, cannot now belie his honourable name," said Langley; "if I have been silent and confused, emir, it was because I feared to provoke your ready anger; but hear me for a few minutes, and be patient. When you have heard our story, if you do not pardon us I will be content to place my head beneath your heel."

"Say on, then," said the emir, waving one hand, and at last clasping Amina to his breast with the other, "speak—Mohamed is listening."

Langley, without any decoration or circumlocution, plainly and distinctly narrated the whole of our adventures, from the time of our discovering and purchasing Amina at Sana, down to the time when he had been—he knew not how—separated from me, and from thence to their present meeting. He had no eloquence but such as honesty and truth, love for Amina, and esteem for the brave and proud emir, inspired him, and his story was told with great simplicity, for he knew very little of the difficult language in which he spoke. Thus his mistakes frequently provoked a half smile on the face of his listener, whose anger gradually gave place to something of gratitude for the rescue of his only relative from an obscure and unhappy fate, and esteem also for the delicacy and tenderness with which he had treated her; but the grim santan leaned on his club, which he clutched with both hands (the fingers of which were withered as an eagle's claws), and heard the narration with that scorn which all that an infidel says must ever merit from a true believer.

"And this is all true, Amina?" said the emir, tenderly, as Fred earnestly and anxiously concluded.

"True," sobbed Amina, "Oh! my brother, it is true as every word revealed on the night of Al Kadr."

"This is blasphemy," growled the santan, "yea, a blasphemy

sufficient to rend those solid hills asunder. By the Lord of the Kaaba, maiden, this Kafir hath enchanted thee!"

"Thou liest, wicked santan," said Amina, indignantly, for she perceived now artfully he influenced her brother, "he has been my protector, my friend, my——"

"Paramour," said the old man, with a snake-like glance and a hissing voice, while he swung aloft his club in a species of frenzy; "thou art lost, lost, I tell thee, lost! and on that day of doom, when this earth shall be changed into another earth, and when liars, like this Kafir, shall gnaw their bloody tongues before the Prophet—on that day when the burning sun shall approach the earth within the length of a bodkin, to scorch the souls of all who are not hidden by the shadow of our Prophet's throne, he will judge between thee and me."

To this rhapsody he added many more from the Koran, every word of which he knew by rote, and brandished his club about him in such a manner that Langley began to look round for something wherewith to defend himself in case of being assailed. Amina gave him a glance full of anguish, and, tottering from her brother's arm, would have fallen, if Fred, with the most anxious solicitude and tenderness, had not caught her, just as she was sinking.

"Nakib," said the young emir, "is Amina, indeed, the keblah of thy heart?"

"Heaven alone knows how sincerely I love her."

The handsome face of Mohamed assumed a troubled expression as he waved his hand, and turned his eyes away, saying—

"It was an idle question. No, no, it cannot be; a hawk mates with a hawk, and the eagle takes an eagle to his nest; so a daughter of Ishmael can only wed a son of the desert—an Arab of the Arabs."

"Emir, hear me——"

"How would thy polished countrymen, so vain of their imaginary civilization and effeminate refinement, laugh to scorn the poor maid of the wilderness, though the names of her race are known since the son of Hagar was saved at Mecca? And what are the lines of all the kings and emirs of Frangistan to such a lineage? No—no—Amina is a child of nature—she knows not the ways of the Faringis."

"If all England shouted with laughter, I will marry this beautiful wild flower," replied Fred, in his blunt, honest way; "what the deuce do I care! I have £6000 per annum, and don't value any man's whim-whams a rush, while I can gratify my own."

"I have other hopes for Amina than to make her the plaything of a rich Faringis," said the emir, with a lowering brow; "she must become the means of strengthening my tribe by a bond of marriage—dost thou understand me, nakib?"

"Emir," urged Fred, anxiously, "you are the sole protector of your sister, and cannot mean to wrong her, and behave like the pagan Arabs of the days before the Flight."

"How?" asked the emir, gloomily.

"Because I have read that—that they wronged their orphans, their daughters, and sisters, by selling and wedding them against their inclination, if they were beautiful, or by restraining them from marriage lest their portions should pass to the enrichment of another household.

"Nay," said the emir, coldly; "Wallah—I have no such thought. Poor Amina can bring nothing to a spouse but her own beauty, two anklets of gold, and the sand that adheres to her slippers; but learn, my friend, that a true believer may not, must not, cannot wed with an—infidel."

"Under pain of the flames of Al Sirat," grumbled the santan, who had been leaning on his club, and surveying with ineffable contempt the young emir, who wasted so much time on a miserable Kafir, and on Amina, who had knelt down on the carpets, where she veiled her face, and wept bitterly; "true—Allah Ackbar! could she quote to a pagan those words of the prophet, which tell us to behave justly, equally, and lovingly, to *all* our wives? Might not Amina be the neglected one, who is 'left in suspense,' like unto one who is divorced and yet dare not marry another."

Fred knew not what to make of all this, but replied with great earnestness.

"Emir, I am in ignorance of what you require of me; but I assure you on my honour as a soldier, and my faith as a gentleman, that I love your sister with all my heart and all my soul. No other wife can dispute this love or share my heart with her, for such is the law, the custom, and religion of my country. I am somewhat unused to plead," he added, haughtily and sadly, "but as Amina loves me in return, I will never yield her up, even to her own brother, while breath or blood remain to me!"

As he spoke he placed himself between Amina and Mohamed, with something of a threatening air, which the other admired more than he was willing to acknowledge. He smiled, and said,

"Inshallah! thou art a bold fellow to confront me thus, here as thou art, alone and far from all aid, while I have five hundred armed Abdali at the door; but wert thou strong as Anak and valiant as Rustam, the Persian, who fought a duel that lasted for two entire days, hear me, and think no more of Amina, as I hope, in time, she will cease to think of thee. Dismiss her from thy thoughts as if she had never been. There must be many fairer brides in Frangistan—though none more loving, more tender, or more true—and there a wife awaits thee—one, doubtless, who, by fate and fashion, is better suited to be thy mate than a woman of Arabia. To-morrow we will restore thee to thy people, who, even now, are close at hand; for, to avenge some assassinations at Aden, the Colonel O'Hara, has marched into Yemen, attacked and destroyed Sheikh Medi and Sheikh Othman; but sure measures are taken—such measures as will bring sore vengeance on the Faringis, for not a man of them shall ever return to Aden, save as a terrified fugitive. And soon I hope to send a sack

of heads to Sana as the announcement of our victory, for such is the sign expected by the imaum, and such are his orders. The chance of battle and escape are left thee, with the choice of remaining here till all is over; but well I know that thy soldier's choice will be to share the dangers of thy people; so from this moment cease to think more of Amina; for I swear to thee, by the beard of the Prophet, by my hopes of Paradise, and by every vow a Mussulman holds sacred, thou canst never wed my sister, even though thy face were brighter than the face of an angel."

Every hope, which the previous kindness of Mohamed had kindled, died away in Langley's breast at these words, and, for a moment, he stood silent and confused, while the santon growled and laughed; but hark! a sound struck their ears.

"*Allah il Allah! Allah Ackbar!*"

It was the *tecbir*—the war-cry of the Arabs—shouted wildly and repeatedly, in the valley without.

"To horse, O Emir!" cried Kior Ibn Kogia, rushing into the grotto; "the Faringis are upon us!"

Then came the report of distant musket shots; the face of Mohamed flushed, his eyes sparkled, he drew his light shield on his arm, sprung to the entrance of the cavern, and leaped on horseback, to find his Abdali sentinels retiring before a body of British skirmishers—the hated invaders of Aden—whose red coats, dotting all the green shrubbery, appeared in the pass above the Grot of the Sleeper.

In the grey light of the morning Fred could perceive this cloud of skirmishers descending, with loud hurrahs, from the steep sides of the wooded pass, and advancing in regular order by alternate files, leaping from tree to tree and from rock to rock for shelter, as they fired and reloaded, whirling their glittering ramrods, and filling the narrow dell with smoke, and causing it to ring with a thousand reverberations, while horses and men fell thick and fast on the winding mountain path.

Langley's heart beat high at the sight of the red coat again, and higher still, when he perceived that they were the flank companies of his regiment, "the Queen's Own." Galled by these bold skirmishers who hovered on their flanks, and at every shot took such deadly and disastrous aim, the Abdali, finding that their horses could neither penetrate the jungle nor climb the sides of the hills, and that their hated enemies were beyond the reach of their lances and swords, after firing a few ineffectual shots with their matchlocks and pistols (despite the proud example of Mohamed-al-Raschid and his true henchmen, the ferocious Jaffer, and the gallant Ibn Kogia), wheeled about and fled, just as the leading company of a close column of infantry, with their bright bayonets flashing in the sun, and with four pieces of artillery in front, approached the head of the pass and halted. The appearance of the dark pieces of cannon, as the blue-coated gunners of Major Drezhorn's troop sprung nimbly off the

tumbrils, with matches lighted and smoking, and as they untraced the horses, unlimbered the guns, and wheeled them round to sweep the gorge below, completed the discomfiture of the Abdali, who galloped away at the full speed of their fleet horses; and so rapid was the advance of "the Queen's Own," that, fortunately, neither Mohamed nor the half-frantic santan, who was now bestriding his high trotting dromedary and brandishing his terrible mace, had time to bear away with them Amina, who was thus left with Fred Langley in the Cave of the Sleeper, or Grot of the Haji—for it was known by both names.

With a hearty British cheer, the Light Company and Grenadiers of "the Queen's Own" poured down the pass and encircled the little lake, sending many a shot whistling after the white-shirted crowd of retreating horsemen, who all vanished into a fissure of the rocky hills as if the bosom of the earth had opened to receive them.

Langley knew, that in his present attire, and with a beard overgrown and unshorn, he was such a wild-looking object as to be in considerable danger of being knocked on the head by a bullet, fired either at random or for mischief's sake; so, during the hurly-burly of the Arab retreat and British advance, he kept somewhat back within the grotto. But this habitation was soon discovered by our advanced files; they dashed in the door by the butt-ends of their muskets, tore down the curtain of the holy sanctuary, and kicked over the water of the Zemzem well, and spared not even the wonderful phial that came from the blessed fountain of Khizer.

"By the powers, here is the father hermit himself!" cried O'Flannigan, on seeing Fred in the dusk of the grotto; "hook him out, my lads."

"A very white skin for an Arab!" said Montague, lowering the point of his sword.

"And an Araby maid, too!" lisped Popkins, with growing interest.

"By all that's wonderful, let us have a look at them!" said O'Flannigan; "sergeant Edmond, take a file of men, and bring this pair of darkies into the daylight."

This order was soon obeyed, and the astonishment of the whole regiment, on discovering Fred Langley playing (as they thought) the part of hermit—with a pretty companion, too—may be more easily imagined than described!

CHAPTER LXXXI.

AN ARAB PRINCESS.

MEANWHILE how fared it with me?

I lay long in a stupor on the sandy waste of Roba-el-Khali; but how long it is impossible for me now to say. Voices roused me, and on looking up I saw the sun shining redly and brightly at the verge of

the level horizon; but whether it was an evening or a morning sun, I knew not then; however, it proved to be the latter. Around me was a group of mounted men, richly clothed and armed with light shields and long slender lances, having the usual tufts of brilliant feathers below their points of steel. They escorted a lady, every part of whose form, save her bright black eyes, was concealed in muffings of rich Damascus cloth, and over her head was held a gorgeous parasol of great size, having a deep fringe of silver. The caparisons of her horse were of the most elaborate and beautiful description. Everything announced her a woman of rank. One glance sufficed to show me all this, and then my head sank again upon the sand, for life had nothing left to interest me more; and no doubt but for the circumstance of their arrival, these pages had never met my reader's eye; for the heat of that day's meridian would have given me a last resting-place in the wilderness, where my latest tormentor, Khaled Ibn Khobaid is still sleeping.

"A fair skinned Faringi," said the lady; "Ahi! He is going to sleep again, Abu Jahl."

"Nay, princess," said a man, lowering his lance; "he is dying fast—but one prick of my spear—"

A cry from the princess and the plunging of her horse among the sand informed me that she had interposed to save me from being subjected to an unnecessary act of cruelty. Again I raised myself upon one elbow, and pointing to my parched dry lips, sank down heavily with weakness and debility,—for I could utter no sound.

"Lady, the man is but a Kafir!" urged Abu Jahl, astonished by such unwarrantable commiseration.

"I care not; are we to be altogether without compassion because these poor people are in darkness, and know not the blessings of religion, or the revelations that were made on the night of Al Kadr? besides, who can say whether or not we shall lead him the right way; and then if Moslem once—Moslem ever. Place him in my palanquin; (I can ride for the remainder of our journey) and give him a cup of sherbet. Hath not the slave Mansouri some on his dromedary?"

Abu Jahl, who, natthless his unfortunate name which means literally the "Father of an Ass," was a venerable Arab, clad in an iron shirt, steel cap, with a chain cape that flapped upon his neck, grumbled under his white beard, as he drew his right foot out of his box stirrup, and dismounted.

"Dost thou pause?" asked the lady, imperiously.

"Nay, nay; the Prophet forbid that my face should be so black before thee," said the Arab, hurriedly.

"Shame on thee, Abu Jahl," said the lady; "thou art pitiless as a Mahrah, and hast no more heart than the eagle that soars aloft with yonder serpent in its claws! Would it not be a sin to leave a stranger with a skin so fair, to die here in the wilderness?"

Thus, like poor Haidée, when she found Don Juan lying half drowned upon the shore,

“——— She deemed herself in pity bound,
As far as in her lay to take me in,
A stranger dying with so white a skin.”

“This will prove another of her freaks,” grumbled old Abu Jahl, as he applied the jar of that delicious sherbet to my baked and broken lips, and then the draught that poured over my husky throat was like the breath of Heaven; “By the tuft of Omar, one might as well attempt to darn with Cleopatra’s needle as to please her in all things!”

I was lifted into the palanquin; the curtains of it were drawn around me; a brief halt was made for the morning prayer, and the whole party used sand—there being no water—for their ablutions, and then we set forward, but in what direction I knew not, for I was too weak and too reckless of what might ensue to be at the trouble of inquiring.

The day passed slowly on, and the motion of the light palanquin which was strapped on the back of a dromedary, for many an hour suggested to my bewildered fancy the idea that I was on board of a ship at sea. This was dispelled by once seeing the veiled head and bright black eyes of the lady peering in at me between the curtains, through which I could also see the warm yellow waste of hateful sand that spread beyond; and twice or thrice my dreams were broken by seeing the grim and bearded visage of Abu Jahl, whose swart features and hood of mail made him resemble the oak effigies of the old knights of the Bass in the kirk of Aikendean.

Abu Jahl asked me how it came to pass that I was lying alone in the desert, so far from all companionship; and being unwilling to afford any clue to my adventures at Hesn-al-Mouhabib, I said, that “I was a soldier, a nakib of Aden, taken in war by a party of Bedouins, all of whom had perished in a storm of sand.” On this he exclaimed,

“Allah! the faithful perished and the unbelieving escaped! Is this the justice of the Prophet to his people?”

But Abu Jahl, who was a soldier by profession, now rather relaxed his grim contempt for me on ascertaining that I was a brother of the sword, and became more kind and communicative. On my inquiring who the noble lady was to whom I was indebted for so much kindness, he shrugged his shoulders, and replied, with a sour smile,

“She is Giuhara, the widow of the prince of Kaa-el-Bun; she has been on a pilgrimage to the tomb of her forefathers in the country of the Mahrahs; and fortunate it is for you that we departed from the great oasis last night instead of this morning, as we intended; and most fortunate it is also that our path lay right in yours, for otherwise you must have perished, so sure as my name is Abu Jahl. Ma-shallah! you lay down on the sand under a fortunate star; it must have shone out brightly; and now since you have won the favour of the princess, perhaps its rays may never grow dim.” As he said this, old Abu Jahl laughed as loudly as an Arab usually laughs.

Nearly the whole day our party continued at full speed, for the Arab horses know no medium between a walk and the gallop; and as all the steeds of the princess were of that peculiar breed which is reared by the Bedouins in remote places—the famous kochlani, with their brilliant eyes and beautiful heads—a breed whose genealogy (say the Arabs) is known for more than two thousand years, being descended from the veritable stud of Solomon Ibn Daood, we got over a vast space of ground in a very short time; and when evening was closing, I hailed with the purest satisfaction the green grass, the verdant hills, and the rustling leaves; and fervently thanked Heaven that the hateful desert was left behind us, as I hoped, for ever.

The casual kindness of the old warrior, Abu Jahl, the food and wine he gave me, together with the hope of liberty, in which I now indulged on finding that my protector or possessor (for a stray Christian is always a prize, a prey, a slave in those wild districts of the earth) was a woman and a princess, so far restored me, that during one of our short halts I begged my new friend to inform her that I could no longer be so ungallant as to deprive her of the palanquin, and begged that she would permit me to ride even the poorest of her horses, while she condescended to take my place.

The two bright eyes again shone through the embroidered openings of a white veil, and between the parted hangings of the litter, and the noble widow told me, as well as the bounding of her horse would permit, "that I was by no means to think of making such an offer again—that I was weak, ill, and unable to sit on horseback; that Abu Jahl, the commander of her horsemen, had told her all; that my story was very pitiful! and she commiserated me deeply; but to take courage—to be of good cheer, for I should have no reason to repent of falling into the hands of Giuhara of Kaa-el-Bun."

And so, before I had time to utter a word of thanks, or enter into protestations, my silken hangings were closed, and our headlong speed went on. The noise of hoofs on the solid sward now rang on all sides of me as the troop dashed forward. Hitherto the feet of the light kochlani had fallen noiselessly on that sea of yielding sand, my adventures among which resembled a horrible dream, from which I was just awakening.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

ABU JAHL.

DURING our rapid journey, which lasted four days, I had no opportunity of addressing this kind lady who had become my protector, and, indeed, my attire was so scanty—a wretched shawl and cummerbund—and being moreover weak and languid, I had no inclination to leave the palanquin. Once the party made a halt, for some hours, near the hut of a wild-looking dervish, whom we found in a

cypress grove playing on a Turkish flute. The horses were fastened by the forelegs to those heelropes which every Eastern horseman carries with him for that purpose. Here the palanquin was lifted from the dromedary's back; it was placed on the sward, and, for a time, I had perfect rest, for the incessant trot of my animal had nearly shaken me to pieces. The princess sent me all the refreshments I required, indeed more than I could partake of; and I began to hope that, with one so kind, matters could not be so desperate with me as they had hitherto been, and that I might be enabled either to rejoin my regiment in safety, or to reach Sana and prosecute my search after the unhappy Cecil Marchmont.

I begged Abu Jahl, who appeared to be the princess's major domo, master of the horse, and general factotum, to ask of her where she was conveying me.

"To her castle of Galbara, near the town of Job-el-Ala."

"Job-el-Ala (or Djobla); I have heard of it before."

"Who has not? it is the capital of her son's principality."

"How far is it from Sana?" I asked.

Abu Jahl scratched his furzy beard, reflected a moment, and then replied that he "believed it was equidistant from Sana and Aden."

"Well—it might be situated worse for me," I replied, with a sigh; "and so your princess has a son—how old is he?"

"Oh—a mere child—three years old, and about *that* height," he answered, holding his hand about nine inches from the ground.

"He must be very small for his age. Is the princess good?"

"Mahomed the Prophet! don't you see she is?"

"Pardon me—of course I do; but is she young and handsome?"

"She is not so young as she has been——"

"An ominous comment, Abu Jahl."

"But she *is* handsome—yea, beautiful as the Peri Banou, though not quite so slender; but then we are not Persians, and find no fault with a woman for being full and round as an egg. Those who are so, always sell better in every market from Mocha to Istamboul."

I knew that Peri Banou meant the Queen of the Fairies; but under all her wrappings and mantles the princess appeared to be a large, and somewhat heavy woman.

"Can you tell me, good Abu Jahl, the distance from Djobla to the capital of the imaum?"

Abu rubbed his beard, which he always did when perplexed, and then replied, "About sixty great Arabian miles." My heart leaped with mingled emotions at this information.

"I shall then be within sixty miles of Cecil. A horse would take me there in one day—thus in one day, I might—nay, I shall be close to her prison! Alas!" I added, as a terrible thought occurred to me, "if I should only find her *grave*!"

I endeavoured to think of other things, and to glean as much local information as possible from Abu Jahl, who seemed to be anything but a strict Mussulman, for he often produced a bottle of very

good wine from his saddle-bag, and we hobbled and nobbed over it like a couple of the best Christians in the world. Old Abu winked mysteriously and stroked his beard when I asked other questions about the princess and her late husband, the prince of Kaa-el-Bun, who, I had heard, was one of the most ferocious little potentates that ever figured even in that corner of the globe. On his death, Giuhara, being his only wife, and mother of his little son, had sold, to the best advantage at the Mocha market, all the ladies of his harem, retaining only an old duenna who had come with her from her father's house; and now none in Kaa-el-Bun dared to dispute her will, which, at times, was despotic as ever that of her "dear departed" spouse had been.

"The prince," continued Abu Jahl, who appeared to retain little love and less respect for that personage, "though a believer, Inshallah! he was not fit to hold thy slippers, and I am sure the princess thought so, too, when she saw thee lying at length on the sand in yonder unsainted wilderness."

I thanked Abu Jahl for his good opinion; we became great friends, and finished his last bottle between us—in secret, however; for he took care to place the curtains of my palanquin between himself and the rest of the party, while thus breaking the law, for which he made the usual attempt to excuse himself by saying,

"I put great weight on the *four* last words of the injunction against wine in the 16th chapter, which sayeth—'and of the fruits of palm-trees and grapes ye obtain inebriating drunk *and also good nourishment*:' for I hold that I do not become drunken, but am only *nourished* by the wine. Thou perceivest I can drink, and yet, Allah be praised! am not the less a true believer."

I remarked that we seemed to travel with great speed and circumspection, and, moreover, sought very mountainous and lonely paths. He answered,

"Your friends, the Faringis of Aden, have invaded the territory of the holy imaum; they have pitched their tents far among the mountains of Yemen, where never a foe-man has trod since the Timariots of the Turkish emperors were rooted out by Khassim; and so we would avoid them, at present, if possible; but, wallah! there is a time for all things, and a time will come for meeting them, too," added Abu Jahl, with a red gleam in his dark brown eyes.

Here were startling tidings for me! My comrades—my own regiment, no doubt—were in Yemen. They might be behind only the next hill; but on what errand? Could it be to unravel with the bayonet the obscurity that must have involved the fate of Langley and myself? As to where the troops were, or what was the object of their march, I could obtain no information from Abu Jahl, further than, "that several quarrels and assassinations had occurred at Aden, and, in revenge, the Dola of the Ingleez (*i.e.*, our Colonel, old O'Hara) had declared open war against all the Arab race; but that he was a downright ass and the son of a burnt father, if he hoped to find aught but a grave in the mountains of Yemen."

On learning that I was a nakib, or officer of these Faringis, the kindness of the princess was rather increased than diminished; and to wipe out all the disgraces I had undergone, she ordered her followers, as an Eastern mark of respect and honour, to shake their tufted lances above my hand, which all, save their old leader, did with undisguised reluctance. After this the horses were unpicketted and the march began.

We passed within a few miles of Hesn-al-Mouhabib, to the blackened walls of which Abu directed my attention, and gave me such a relation of the late burning, in which evil genii, the spirit of Eblis, and magic were so woven up with truth, that but for the sorrowful circumstances under which the desperate attempt of that night was made, I could have "laughed at his beard." It never seemed to occur once to his very opaque mind, that I might have been concerned in the affair, for it was his firm belief, that after so sacrilegiously desecrating the palace of the holy imaum, the two wicked Kafirs had been torn limb from limb and devoured, without salt, by the Ghoule Biaban which haunted the tomb of the Sultan Khassim.

We crossed the Hargiah, but now its once swollen waters had subsided to a runnel that trickled among withered jowlies or along a bed of sand. My sad heart swelled within me, when I thought of those who were by my side when last I looked upon its furious flood, when, red and rapid as a Scottish stream, it swept towards the Arabian Gulf.

Again I recognised the mountains by which poor Langley and I had ridden together, under the guidance of Kior Ibn Kogia, for now we drew near the petty territory of my conductress, and saw the peaks that look down on the vast and fertile plain of Beitel Fakih. We passed the ruined city of Dhafar, an ancient place famous for possessing a stone inscribed by characters in a tongue unknown; but which Abu Jahl declared to have been written by the finger of Galbara, the great giant of Arabia. We made a brief halt at Jerim; then crossing the mountain of Samara, we descended into a beautiful plain through which the Zebid and the Meidam flow, and approached the seat of the princes of Kaa-el-Bun.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

THE CASTLE OF GALBARA.

AFTER traversing a paved road of great antiquity, after passing the ruins of a brick caravanserai, a few poor huts and a bridge of stone which spanned a deep and dry ravine, about sunset we reached this residence, which was situated on an eminence above the Zebid, and, like most of the Arab forts, was evidently of Turkish erection; but the native love of the marvellous assigned to it a much more remote origin; and thus Abn Jahl informed me that it was built by

a giant, from whom it took its name, Galbara, who measured ten feet without his helmet or sandals, and who was exhibited at Rome in the days of Claudius Cæsar. It consisted of the usual half-ruined outwork, with a few pieces of cannon, a court-yard, stables, and large misshapen dwellings, having flat roofs, on which stood a row of flower-pots. In many parts it strongly reminded me of Mohamed's stronghold on the Red Mountain.

The interior was richly decorated, and I was led by Abu Jahl through many apartments which had Persian carpets, and even European chairs, (which I found to have been taken from the wrecks of the "Minerva" and "Farnham Castle,) though the majority had only Hadramaut mats and cushions; while on the walls were hangings of Damascus cloth, rich floral arabesques, and trophies of Arab swords, crooked Turkish sabres, and Hadramaut jambeas, Tartar matchlocks, Persian bows, British muskets, and Indian battle-axes; for in his time the late lord and master of the princess Ginbara had been a warlike, fierce, and predatory sheikh, whose unexpected dismissal to Paradise by the sword of Rabb-al-Hoosi, was considered welcome intelligence by Her Majesty's garrison at Aden.

I was conducted to a luxurious bath, and treated with every honour by the slaves of the princess. On coming out, I received a rich dress which might have graced a pasha of Istamboul; the vest and drawers were of pink-coloured satin, with a shirt of the finest cambric—an incredible luxury, after all I had endured; my hair, beard, and mustachios, which had been all growing "unshorn and unkempt," were now carefully trimmed and perfumed. I received a crimson velvet jacket beautifully embroidered with gold, and a sash of Persian silk, in which a gold-hilted jambea and loaded pistol were placed.

Perfumes and essences were offered to me, and now, in dressing my hair, I observed that it came away in handfuls, owing to the grief and misery I had undergone. In short, the metamorphosis was so complete, that my own dog would not have known me, and I felt in the seventh Heaven, so far as bodily comfort was concerned. Abu Jahl, who had now divested himself of his warlike trappings, came to acquaint me that the princess expected me to supper, as she was anxious to hear all my adventures, adding, "to be sure and have plenty to tell her, as she delighted in hearing stories told."

I was conducted to an apartment where there was spread a repast consisting principally of rice, coloured variously by the juice of cherries and pomegranates, fruit, and sherbet in Chinese bowls, sweet-meats, honey cakes, and coffee; a pilau of fowl baked in rice and dyed with saffron, a tart of oranges, almonds, and sugar; all these were served up in crystal, china, and silver dishes, upon two little tables, beside each of which was a velvet seat or cushion. The apartment was spacious, and had pillars of white chunam, with hangings of pale blue silk, all arabesqued with gold; a carpet of

brilliant colours covered the centre of the floor, the edge of which was also hard white chunam, somewhat rudely painted with flowers. The painted casements were curtained by festoons of yellow Damascus cloth, and one was left open, through which I saw the fading sunlight that lingered on the summit of Mount Mharra and reddened the waters of the Zebid, which washed the castle rock, and wound between many a grove of palms and thicket of heavy walnut and plum tree growing wild. Several lights were burning in tall and slender tripod candlesticks, and these filled the apartment with perfume. One glance sufficed to show me all this, and the second encountered the princess, who entered at that moment attended by two slaves, both of them pretty little Abyssinian girls.

For a moment I was dazzled and confused by the splendour of her aspect, by the unwonted honour done to me, and the whole peculiarity of my situation.

She placed me on her *left* hand, the place of honour in the East, and according to the Arab etiquette, I took my seat first and saluted her, by placing my right hand on my head and heart, and then we both sat *à la Turc*, and very near each other. After a few matter-of-fact remarks, concerning my health and our journey, Abu Jhal retired, and attended by the little girls, whom I discovered to be tongueless—mutes! we proceeded to sup, and during this, I had an opportunity of closely observing my Princess of Kaa-el-Bun, who *now* unveiled herself to my no small surprise.

Abu Jahl had not deceived me in calling her handsome, for every way she was what even we term a “fine” woman, and might have passed for a Cleopatra. Her skin had an olive tint, but not darker than one might see in an Andalusian belle; though large limbed, full and round (for she was now verging on thirty), the form of her head, her bosom, and bare arms was beautiful, and her features were all that a sculptor could desire. Her lips were full, perhaps too much so, and her eyes were black, of course, and large and languishing, but shaded by very long lashes. Her hair was, beyond conception, luxuriant and long; I could perceive only one defect—her neck was too full and large, and though her chin was finely rounded and dimpled, it decidedly approached the—double.

She had attired herself, I presumed, with unusual care and splendour, for she wore a velvet vest of that bright yellow, which invariably becomes all dark complexioned women; its wide, loose sleeves were fringed with gold, and it was tied by little tassels of silk. Her trowsers were of the softest cambric, and her slippers were a mass of embroidery. Around her neck were three chains and a chaplet of ninety Bahrien pearls, white and yellow alternately, with a necklace of onyxes from Dhafar, which she afterwards assured me was the identical jewel which, in the sixth year of the Hejra, nearly lost the reputation of Ayesha, the wife of the Prophet. Her ear-rings flashed at the slightest motion of her stately head; her zone was of native gold, and fashioned from the globules which

have been gathered in the rivulets of Yemen since the days of Soloman; her armlets were strings of precious stones from the mountain of Samara, and in each was a talisman. The snow-white pearls of Oman were woven among the blackness of her silky hair, and the perfumes of Hadramaut floated about her; but the most magnificent of the many ornaments with which this luxurious woman was literally loaded, was in her turban. This was a diamond, an ounce in weight, being only a quarter less than the boasted one, now in the Russian sceptre, and this splendid jewel shone above her head with incessant rays like those of a star.

She asked me many strange questions concerning Frangistan, the general term by which all Europe—as if it were only one kingdom—is known in the East.

"Is it true," she asked, "that the sheikhs, emirs—yea, and the princes of the Faringis dance with women, and like our dervishes, and the Almé of the Egyptians?"

"Yes," said I, "but believe me, without the frenzy of the first, or the wantonness of the second."

"Allah! what a labour—what a toil! here we pay our slaves to do all that for us."

I have heard of a Chinese mandarin who made the same remark, when at a ball in London.

Supper over, its remains were conveyed away to regale the grooms and slaves; our hands were bathed in rose-water, after which a hookah was offered me and gratefully accepted, and thus, like a pasha or several tails, I sat smoking perfumed tobacco and drinking cool sherbet from a beautiful bowl. The princess was very inquisitive to know how and why I came to be in that desolate desert, and so far from all human companionship, and begged of me to relate my story, which I was obliged to do with nervous circumspection, for I dreaded to make the slightest reference to having ever been within ten miles of Hesn-al-Mouhabib; and thus, while she lied me with delicious sherbet, I sat like another Æneas relating to this modern Dido a long tissue of adventures, in which all that were true were confused with those which I was compelled to invent for the occasion, to account for the predicament in which she found me.

It would not be very pleasant for me to rehearse all this princess said to me, or how she smiled and blushed, languished and cast down her eyes, doing all in her power to make me reciprocate the passion with which I had inspired her—or rather with which she had chosen to inspire herself—neither would it be becoming nor gentlemanly to do so; but of this I became assured, that I had now a more dangerous and difficult task to perform than any that had fallen to my unhappy lot. Regard for my own safety compelled me to appear not quite insensible to her charms; thus, I kissed her hand repeatedly, and twice she presented her cheek for the same purpose. Her advances were unmistakeable, for love soon ripens under a tropical sun; but when I thought of Cecil, my heart grew cold

as ice; I was covered with confusion; and when she asked me, in a whisper, "if I could love her and be true," I answered cautiously,

"None could behold you, lady, without loving you, and none will love you without being true."

"Will *you* love me, then?" she asked, with the voice of one whose behests had seldom been disputed.

"I would be most ungrateful were I not to love you truly and sincerely, lady," I replied, kissing her hand again, while she pretended to tremble, and somewhat needlessly cast down her fine eyes.

Her pity and compassion seemed strongly moved by all I had told her, and many portions of my story she begged me to relate again, and she listened to them with her dark orbs cast down, her olive cheek suffused with red, and her fine bosom heaving, while her hands played nervously with her ornaments, and tears trembled at the ends of her long black lashes.

"Allah! how you have been spared! you were born indeed under a fortunate star—your luck is great—your face must be white before the Prophet! Oh, tell me that once more!" Such were her repeated exclamations, and thus, like poor Æneas, I told her

"O'er and o'er, but still in vain,
For still she begged to hear it once again.
The hearer or the speaker's mouth depends,
And thus the tragic story never ends."

Suddenly something seemed to strike upon her recollection, and her eyes sparkled as she exclaimed,

"Mashallah! now I remember. You speak always of being at Sana—were you never at Hesn-al-Mouhabib?"

I now felt my heart tremble with confusion and alarm, for I knew well the danger of making such an admission to one who was in alliance with, and perhaps a tributary to the imaum, but being unable to tell her a deliberate falsehood, I was obliged to acknowledge having once been there. Her face became clouded by anger and disappointment.

"God is great! and you violated the sanctity of the seraglio—set fire to the palace, and all to bear away a miserable slave of the imaum! Allah Kerim—I remember now. You have not told me all, O Faringi! Your face has become blackened before me, and I have thrown ashes on my own head by protecting you; speak," she cried, imperiously, "and have no fear, for those slaves are without tongues to tell what they may hear or see."

"Lady, I did nothing at Hesn-al-Mouhabib that I am not ready to do again," I replied, calmly, while reflecting how to meet the threatening storm.

"And you dared all this for a woman of Frangistan?"

"You forget, lady, that I am a Faringi."

"For a slave of the imaum—a creature bought and sold by Osman

Oglou, perhaps in the public market," she continued, with increasing scorn; "it was rash, sacrilegious, terrible, and the punishment will be beyond conception terrible, should you fall into the power of Solyman. But stay—my just indignation at this act carries me away, perhaps," she added, more calmly; "tell me, what is this woman (for whom you have risked so much), what is she to you? a wife—a sister—a love?"

I was silent; for to tell the truth would be most dangerous, and now the princess had given me a cue.

"Speak, nakib, for unless," she added, loftily, "thou hast two hearts, like Abu Mamer of old, thou canst not love us both."

"She is my—sister."

"Allah Ackbar! she is only thy sister? Thy sister—then I shall love her too—oh, how I shall love her!" she added, as her wild black eyes filled with light; "forgive me for suspecting thee, but surely thou art too wise to seek her freedom. Is she not happier, greater, nobler, in the seraglio of Solyman, and favoured by the regard of the king of kings—the centre of the earth—than ever she could be with thee; and though an infidel, by being there she may make thy fortune and increase the shadows of thy race for ever!"

This full-blown Oriental beauty could as little conceive the nature of my love for Cecil Marchmont, as the secret anger with which her suggestions inspired me.

"All the gifts of a king were useless to me while she remains a prisoner and a slave."

"Giuhara can confer a thousand gifts on the man she loves," said the princess, casting down her eyes.

"Lady, I am full of gratitude."

"Allah Kerim," she said, raising her eyebrows, "is it only gratitude thy heart can feel?"

"Gratitude lasts for life, lady—love may die in an hour."

"It may be so in Frangistan," she said, pettishly, "where men and women live altogether like wild animals, and dance promiscuously like Rhufius and Calendars—but love is not so here."

"I am most grateful and most true," I continued, pondering on every word, and considering what to say next; "but I would not wear the crown of all the Indies while my sister remained a slave of that wicked old inauum."

At that moment she started, raised her hands and glanced at the slave-girls, but they remained immovable as little black statues, with eyes that shone like beads.

"My heart is too full of grief to leave much room for love, lady, all dazzled as I am by the splendour of your beauty and the marvel of your condescension."

"Take courage—I will free your sister. One whose love for *her* is so strong, would not prove false to *me*." She placed her brow on her hand close to my shoulder, and reflected for a minute, while, not-

withstanding her beauty, which was no doubt very seducing, I felt only confusion and repugnance at the strange, decided, and somewhat imperious, or rather imperial manner in which she desired me to love her. I felt that I was playing the part of a fool. Something of anger at times rose in my breast, but the image of Cecil repressed it, and fear for her and the hope of achieving her freedom by any means made me resolve to act the lover for a time, if this gay widow of his late eminence the Prince of Kaa-el-Bun, would have it so, for her wealth and power were great, and thus *she* might do much that I never could achieve for Cecil or myself.

"Thou art sure she is in Sana?" said she, tenderly.

"Sure as that I have now the joy to sit beside you on the same cushion and on the same carpet. Many days have not passed since Rabd-al-Hoosi conveyed her there with Osman Oglou and a train of horse."

"Al-Hoosi, a cunning knave, vizier though he be; a wretch, who slew my husband! And your sister; what is her name?"

"Cecil," said I, with a tremulous sigh. It seemed an age since I had uttered that dear name aloud.

"*Sijil!*" reiterated Guihara, with surprise; "what a strange name! It is thus we style the angel, the scribe of the Prophet, who writes down the actions of every man's life, and rolls up the scroll at his death, Al Sijil."

My heart was too full of sadness to care about correcting her spelling.

"Hear me," she continued; "to-morrow I will proceed to Sana, and enter the seraglio of Solyman as a female—a seller of essences, trinkets, and gauds. I will soon discover your sister, and tell her that you are in safety; that you are here, and how I found you in the Abode of Emptiness; how I love you better than myself, and how you love me in return. All this I will tell her, and trust to my own ingenuity for setting her free. One woman may do more than a thousand swordsmen in such a case as this."

"But the guards," said I, inexpressibly alarmed by this offer, which, if put in execution, would soon have discovered all I wished to conceal; and while it caused the eternal separation of Cecil from me, might perhaps procure my own destruction at the hands of a woman whose passions were so violent, and whose mind was so ill regulated. "Consider again, princess; remember the eunuchs and Osman Oglou."

"A black dog and the son of a dog!" said she, vehemently; "if he dared to cross my path, I would stab him on the spot, for I should not go on such a dangerous errand without a sharp jambea in my bosom."

With such a woman, and when thus armed, what might be the result of Cecil's avowal that I was her lover, and *not* her brother? My heart shrunk at the idea, and with all my eloquence I begged that she would at once dismiss from her mind all thought of an

expedition so fraught with danger; that I would never permit her to run such risks; that dearly as I loved my sister, I would rather a thousand times leave her in the Anderun of the imaum, than have one hair of Giuhara's beautiful head endangered, and so forth, with a great deal more to the same effect.

The impassioned Arab became enchanted! Her whole body vibrated with delight, but what was to be the end of all this love-making, I was sorely puzzled to conceive, and would have given a full year's pay to have been a long day's march away from her and her castle of Galbara.

"So be it, Allah Kerim!" said she, tenderly; "I will be guided by thee in all things."

"You are a perfect Leilah!" said I.

"And thou wilt be my Maijnoon," replied this fascinating widow, with a (very faint) blush at my reference to the famous oriental love story.

"I have one more chance for your sister's freedom," said she, after a long pause, which was broken only by an occasional sip of the sherbet, a pressure of the hand, or a playful caress; "my brother occupies a high position at the court of Sana, and he might do something for us, as he is constantly about the person of the sultan. He will shortly be here. Indeed, by a message received by Abu Jahl, I may look for him every hour, and to him we will apply ourselves the moment he arrives. He is a brave and gallant soldier, and will love thee well, I am assured."

"What is your brother's name?" I asked.

"Mahmoud Ali Badr, captain of the horse guard to the holy imaum."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

A HASTY DEPARTURE.

THE double announcement that Mahmoud Ali was her brother, and was shortly expected at Galbara, struck me like a pistol-shot! I dropped the heavy mouthpiece of my pipe, and had the greatest difficulty in concealing my confusion; but knowing the weakness of her absurd love for me, I hoped that even this danger might be avoided.

I told her that Badr was one of my bitterest enemies, and that if he found me here, I should inevitably be surrendered to the imaum and destroyed, for her brother was one of the despot's most zealous and faithful soldiers, and had fought against her husband at the battle of Beitel Fakih. She appeared impressed by what I said, and after a little reflection, told me not to be alarmed; to trust everything to her, and that she would keep me in concealment, either until Mahmoud had departed, or she had ascertained the true state

of matters at Sana, and how he was affected towards me. Again I assured her that I could not for a moment trust myself within the same walls which contained the nakib of the cavalry, for I was too well aware that he would soon undeceive her as to my pretended relationship to Cecil, as he knew better. Guihara would not listen to me, but laughed and clapped her hands; the poor little mutes started to her side, and she desired them to summon her musicians, as she intended to soothe and allay my anxiety by a concert of music. Immediately on this, about a dozen of richly-dressed black slaves, male and female, appeared at the lower end of the beautiful apartment, and began a concert of wild and simple but very monotonous airs, of which I could only glean here and there a few notes of the Turkish flute and double-piped zamara, amid the continual beating of the semendsie or Arabian fiddle-drum, and the industrious scrapping of many long bows on the horsehair strings of the marabbas, which were accompanied by three pairs of castanets.

All this was meant to soothe and delight me, but the monotony of the airs, together with the unmusical clatter of the drums and castanets, which had no reference whatever to the music, was rather irritating than otherwise; yet Guihara lay back among her velvet cushions with an expression of drowsy happiness in her half-closed glittering eyes, and an air of beautiful or graceful indolence about her, all evincing her high appreciation of this discordant performance, which was no sooner over than she clapped her hands approvingly, and ordered sweetmeats to be distributed to each musician, and a silver coin to be placed in every singer's mouth.

During this pause in the entertainment, she gazed at me from time to time with soft and languishing glances, which, to tell the truth, caused me no small trouble, for to respond to them would have been a treason to Cecil; and to receive them coldly might produce I knew not what. Feeling that I was on dangerous ground and would be compelled to act warily, I raised to my lips the hand of this voluptuous lady, and as I did so, her eyes filled with fire; she made a sign and the musicians vanished; the hangings of the arches at the lower end of the room fell over them as they retired, and while she sighed deeply, Guihara placed her cheek on my shoulder.

"Oh, nakib, look on me," said she; "could not our souls melt in love like the hues of the rainbow?"

I was pondering on a reply to this figurative remark, when the dark face of Abu Jahl appeared between the blue silk hangings of the doorway, and the harsh notes of an Arab horn were heard without.

"Mahmoud Ali Badr has arrived," said he; "and desires permission to place his slippers at your door."

Anger and disappointment clouded the usually serene brow of the princess, who pressed my hand and whispered, with an air of tenderness

"I must see my brother; but Heaven will take you into its keeping till morning; farewell, and wear this for my sake." She placed in my hand a bracelet, and desired Abu Jahl, on peril of his beard, to see me to a remote and safe apartment.

"Wallah, the hues of the rainbow were very near blending just now," said the old fellow, with a knowing grin as he led me away. "And what is this she has given you? Allah Kerim, it is an *ayek-jemani*!"

"A what, Abu?"

"A priceless talisman for a soldier to wear—a cornelian of Damar, which, when applied to a wound, has the power of stanching blood in an instant."

"That is, if the blood flows from the veins of a believer?"

"Of course."

"Then it can be of no use to me, for I put more faith in a piece of good sticking-plaster; and I beg, Abu, that you will accept of it for my sake."

"Allah, what! her bracelet—a gift from the princess—taken warm off her own arm? What will you say in the morning, when she misses it?"

"That I have lost it—but it is very improbable that I shall see her in the morning. Put it in your turban."

"May your house be prosperous, O nakib!" said Abu, as he rolled the bracelet in the folds of his head-dress; "Allah Ackbar! but you are high in the favour of Giuhara."

"It would seem so," said I, with a grimace.

"Then put your trust in God, for her brother has no friendly feeling for her lovers, and he will treat you as if you were the father of all Faringis."

"How?"

"By bowstring or jambea, he soon makes an end of them. It is only a month since we had a gay young Persian sawn in two by his orders."

These comfortable words closed the conversation, which brought us to the entrance of my apartment, where Abu Jahl placed in my hand one of those tapers which were carried by the little mutes, shut the door, and left me alone.

I sat down for a moment, but only a moment, to reflect on my position, and the result was, that an immediate retreat from Galbara, while the night was yet young, seemed imperatively necessary for many reasons, all of which must be sufficiently apparent to the reader. Securing the door by its internal bolt, and concealing the taper within the couch that was intended for me, and which had beautiful hangings of light blue silk that drooped from a gilded bracket in the wall, and spread gracefully around it on the floor, I proceeded to make a reconnaissance of the premises. I removed a little Turkish toilet table, with its dressing-case of prettily painted wood and its Italian mirror, and opening the large sash window,

which was glazed with brightly stained glass, found that it overlooked the court of the fortress. Opposite were the spacious but half-ruined stables; these were the lowest range of the buildings, and consequently the most easy to be surmounted.

I at once decided that my mode of egress must lie in that direction; but then a horse was necessary, lest I should be pursued and overtaken, and more than all was money most necessary to me. At this thought I instinctively placed my hand in the pocket of my ample silk trowsers, and finding something heavy, drew it forth, and it proved to be a richly embroidered purse, containing ten pieces of gold and twenty of silver. When I reflected on the kindness of this Arab lady, and the attention even to trifles, which had made her have this purse placed among the clothes she had given me, I felt something of remorse for my intention of levánting from her house like a thief in the night; but the hope of reaching Sana and my desire of freeing Cecil overcame every objection, and I replaced it in my pocket without the least compunction, and once more resumed my examination.

"Better be off at once," thought I, "than linger here and do worse, or be discovered by that devilish Ali Badr, who will assuredly put my eyes out lest I should escape again before he can deliver me to his despotic sovereign."

I dreaded also, that some officious, wicked, or avaricious fellow, or one in whom all those pleasant traits were combined, might exist among the palanquin bearers or spearmen of Abu Jahl; and that one such should communicate to Ali Badr something dangerous concerning me, for I was at the mercy of many tongues; but, most fortunately, none knew the true story of my adventures, or the price set upon me by the exasperated Solyman. I waited anxiously until all was still in this Arab fort, and the time had verged on midnight, so nearly as might be judged by the stars, of which I had picked up a little knowledge during my sojourn in this land of wild adventure. I now remembered that I was almost unarmed, and past experience had taught me that I might as well remain as attempt to travel thus.

"Ah," thought I, with a sigh, "if I had only a sword!"

Assisted by my taper, which was now nearly burned out, I believed it possible to reach the apartment where I had seen so many trophies of arms; but the double dread of losing myself, and of being found prowling by some stray servant, made me pause with irresolution; but overcoming it, I crept along the matted passages, and saw before me the Moorish arch of the great saloon, which was all involved in darkness. On looking about me, I perceived the beautiful steel cap, chain-shirt, sword and pistol, of Mahmoud Ali Badr, where he had evidently just thrown them, after dismounting from his journey, on a folded Persian mat, in a corner of the saloon. If these I immediately possessed myself, hurried back to my apartment, and again secured the door against intrusion. I had thus procured both arms and a disguise, and I shall never forget the revenge-

ful glow of hope that kindled in my breast, as I attired myself in those handsome trappings, buckled round my waist the glittering belt of the Arabian warrior—my enemy—and placed in it his long straight sword and brass Damascus pistol, into the barrel of which I dropped the ramrod to be assured that it was loaded.

The silk cords and tassels by which the curtains of my bed were festooned, when removed and tied to the windowsole, enabled me with ease to reach the ground, and from thence to steal in the shadowy side of the buildings towards the stables, the various entrances to which stood open, for the Arabs do not deem it necessary to take such care of their horses as we do—or, at least, they do it after a different fashion; for in the wilderness the horse has no other covering than a branch of the same tree that shelters the hardy Bedouin, his master. Finding the roof of these stables higher than I at first supposed, I entered, in the hope of finding a passage through them by some slit or loophole in the wall, and also for the purpose of finding a cord with which to lower myself down. All was still in the stalls; not a watchdog barked or a man was stirring in the castellated mansion; I heard only the feet of the horses and mules as they rustled among the dhourra straw and the dry jowlies which formed their bedding.

The outer wall of this stable was broken and ruined in many places; it had probably been breached by cannon in the old war against the Turks, and the gaps had been filled up by the unskilful Arabs with mud and small stones. In many parts these had fallen out, and revealed the scarped or green sloping bank of the fort, with the Zebid flowing at its base. Thus, to escape became a matter of no difficulty; and, by the size of one of those breaches, I was encouraged to believe, that after enlarging it a foot or two, I might take out a horse with me, and thus, beyond a doubt, convey myself, long before morning, far from the troublesome tenderness of Giuhara and the dangerous vicinity of her brother Mahmoud. I was in a land of rancorous enemies, among a people who apparently regarded no law, human or divine, and, least of all, the right of personal liberty; therefore, I felt myself perfectly justified in making free with everything necessary to secure my own freedom, and, more than all, the freedom of Cecil; for the idea that she was a prisoner at Sana, at the mercy of such a creature as Osman Oglou, and such an impious wretch as the pampered imaum, inwardly stifled every objection and grain of compunction in my breast.

A brilliant starlight, which shone through the openings in the ruined stables, enabled me to take all my measures with ease and precaution; thus, I found no difficulty in removing the dry mud and large round stones, which had evidently been taken from the bed of the river to patch the ruined wall. In five minutes I had formed a breach sufficiently large to take out a horse, and soon selected one out of six that were in stall. Seizing the first suit of harness that came to hand. I girthed on a handsome saddle, which was seate

with crimson velvet, and pommelled with a gilded knob larger than a grapeshot, and next appropriated a rich bridle, with a powerful bit. I hoped these also formed part of the trappings of my acquaintance Mahmoud, whom I had a great desire to meet on more equal terms ere long, and to repay him for the treatment Langley and I had experienced at his hands and those of Osman.

In this escape, and its accessories, I had already succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. In all I did, I acted well and wisely; and yet it is strange that all was done by mere animal instinct, for my thoughts were always far away—hovering, as it were, over Sana, the place for which I was bound, without a guide, without a friend, and on an errand which, for desperation can have no parallel save in the pages of a wild romance.

Partly by coaxing, and partly by threatening, I dragged the snorting horse—which proved to be one of the beautiful and fleet kochlani—through the narrow aperture, and with great difficulty led it in a zig-zag manner down the bank, the steepness of which, together with the depth and rapidity of the river at its base, being considered a double protection, might account no doubt for the ruined state in which I found the external wall. Fortunately, not a window, loop, or lattice overlooked the slope, for the noise of the horse's hoofs as he half slid down the bank on his haunches, must have caused an alarm. But the most arduous part was yet to come; for the river had to be crossed, and it swept round the rocks of Galbara like a flooded mill-race.

As Arabs usually ride with their knees up to the saddle-bow, I lengthened the leathers of the stirrups, which also serve instead of spurs, and springing upon the back of the kochlana, rushed him headlong into the stream. Snorting and breathing hard, he swam nobly; but all his body was below the water, which flowed over my neck and shoulders. I permitted him to swim with the current for a few yards; then, turning his head to the bank, I got him gently landed on firm ground, and rode him softly about a quarter of a mile, until he became breathed and reassured.

Then I pressed the prickly stirrups into his side, and like an arrow from a bow, he dashed with me along the narrow and grassy vale of the Zebid, between two hills, one of which was Mount Mharas; and we soon left the fortress of Galbara and its double dangers far behind.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

THE KABOBKI.

STILL guided by the stars, I rode almost at haphazard in search of Sana.

At times I paused to listen, but not a sound was heard on the wind of the valley, save the cry of a jackal, or hyæna, on their mid

might prow. I was happy to perceive that the nag I had borrowed was a fresh one, and certainly before the end of my journey I fully proved his mettle. I found myself in a wild place, where nothing grew but the cocoa-tree, bananas, and Indian figs, with their branches arched over and rooted into the ground, from whence their fibres shot again; and before me rose a ridge of grey rocks, where the black vultures and white cranes built their nests, and where ere long I saw them wheeling aloft in the glow of the rising day. When the sun rose above these rocks, I could perceive, about ten miles behind me, the city of Abb, surrounded by its walls, crowning a mountain top, where the gilded domes of its mosques shone in the yellow gleam like three brass basons inverted.

I was certain that by this time my escape must have been discovered, and wondered what excuse Guihara would make to Ali Badr for the disappearance of his beautiful arms and his fine horse, if, indeed, the noble animal, whose arching neck I patted from time to time, belonged to the proud soldier who treated me so brutally in Hadramaut.

I now discovered that I had gone rather astray, and recognised the grove of palms, where the wild dervish, clad in skins, with his bludgeon, beads, and calabash, was again seated as before, playing on his Turkish flute, the notes of which he exchanged for loud shouts of "*Allah ho Actbar*," when he saw me, while he frantically brandished his arms. I drew my knees high up on the saddle, and being very much sunburned, under the shade of Mahmoud's steel cap, hoped to pass for an Arab; and being anxious to mislead the dervish as to my real route, I flung to him a piece of silver, and asked him "the road to Mocha."

He pointed to a path, like a goat track, which led up the mountain side.

"Nay," said I, "that is the way to Sana."

"Thou art wrong, nakib," he replied, angrily; "out of my mouth never came aught but the words of truth, and I assure thee yonder path leads straight over the hill to the paved road of Mocha. The way to Sana branches off from it at the grave of Ahmed, which may be known by its huge mound of earth and circle of cypress-trees."

"Thanks, thanks, good dervish," said I, throwing him another piece of silver; "may your prosperity increase."

"Farewell, generous emir," he replied; "may your purse be deep as the well of Kashan!"

"Then it will be deep enough," said I, as I galloped off, for the bottom of this fabulous well is in the bowels of the earth. I crossed the green mountain ridge, and looked back as I dipped over it. The dervish's hut and grove of palms had diminished to a speck, and the fertile country between me and Abb lay like a map at my feet, but I could perceive no trace of pursuit. Half an hour's riding brought me to a green mound of earth, around which stood a circle

of tall and sombre cypresses. Here lay Prince Ahmed, brother of an imaum of Yemen, who in the last century had declared himself independent, and fought several battles with the soldiers of Sana, one of whom slew him by a poisoned arrow, and now the place of his repose was the fabled haunt of Ghoules and Guebres; but neither Ghoule nor Guebre saw I, as in the bright morning sunshine, full of hope, anxiety, and ardour, I dashed along the Sana road, with no star to guide me but my love for Cecil, and no means of entering the city but such as my horse's heels, a sharp sword, and a bold heart could afford me.

As I rode on warily, avoiding villages and towns, but carefully retaining the main road in view, I had no refreshment, save now and then a draught of water, taken in the hollow of my hand from a spring. After a time I abandoned this mode of proceeding, and rode on boldly, as if every foot of the way to Sana was my own property.

The unclouded sun glared down upon me, but still I spurred on, at the time when orientals take their noonday rest, for although my fleet horse went like the wind, my wishes were ever before me, and my heart leaped with joy—if, indeed, I can so term the fierce glow that rose within me—when, afar off, I saw the capital of the Yemenees appear, with its gilded domes and tall white minarets surrounded by their crenelated walls, and overhung by Mount Nikkum, with its Turkish castle. I had now ridden more than forty miles, and my horse required rest. I halted in a lonely grove, removed the bridle and saddle, and groomed him with some tufts of dried grass, while he cropped the tender herbage that grew under the shady trees.

During this necessary halt, I was surprised to find my whole body bathed in a cold and clammy perspiration, and that a tremor, like that of an ague, was coming over me. This was succeeded by a glow like that of a burning fever. I knew not whether to attribute these symptoms—so dangerous in such a climate as Yemen—to past sufferings, or to my last night's sudden immersion in cold water, followed by a rapid ride in wet garments and a chain shirt; but, doubtless, I was now beginning to suffer from the combined effects of all that had agitated me of late. Fear of falling ill on the way, before I could reach the residence of my sole and last hope in Sana, Rabdal-Hoosi, made me girth my horse once more, and push on at a pace that was dangerous alike for myself and the beautiful animal I rode.

Five-and-twenty miles, at least, were yet before me, and the sun was westward now. The fleet kochlana bore me on with the speed of an arrow, and I reached the most eastern gate of Sana just as an old muezzin was bellowing the call to evening prayer from the upper gallery of a tall, white, slender minaret, around which hung a garland of coloured lamps.

Some of the half-naked, but well-armed, soldiers (of whom I re-

marked there was an unusual number) gathered at the gate to scrutinize me; but riding with my knees up to the saddle-bow, I dashed right through them to avoid questions, and followed by cries of—

"Curses on your beard! may your father roast to all eternity!" I rode along the great street, which led to the bezestein, with all the air of an emir. Fortunately the evening was dusky now; lights were beginning to twinkle in the mosques and bazaars, and the keepers of the caravanserais were preparing to close their heavy gates.

Sinking with fatigue and weakness, and trembling in every limb, I reined up at the open window of a kabob shop, and to recruit my failing strength requested a slice of meat and draught of sherbet. I eat the first off its skewer, and drained the second from a china cup, without leaving my saddle. I then put down a piece of gold, and would have ridden off without waiting for change, but feared to excite any remark, however trivial; and while the kabob seller paid me, I unluckily asked him why so many soldiers were loitering about, and wherefore the guards at the gates were doubled; upon which he opened his eyes very wide, and asked me where I had come from.

"From Hedjaz," I replied, without hesitation.

"Then, of course, you cannot know that the Kafirs of Aden (may they grill in the flames!) have attacked and destroyed Sheikh Othman and Sheikh Medi, and now dare to menace our father, the imaum, in his own city of Sana."

"Indeed," said I, as with a glowing heart I turned to leave the eating-house. "Which is the way to the house of the grand vizier?" I asked, for the unlighted and unpaved streets were darkening fast.

"Turn round by the first mosque you come to, pass the great gate of the bezestien, and then it is before you."

"Thanks, thanks, and peace be with you."

"But the vizier is now at the great mosque," said a bystander, as I shortened my reins.

"Ah," added the kakobki, "we all know that he is a walking Koran—the father of all viziers—ε man who would rather die than taste wine."

"Or break his fast in Ramazan," added the other. "Tis no further gone than yesterday since he had the beards of three Guebres plucked up by the roots, as I would pluck a fowl; and he never touches a woman, even with the tip of his finger, without washing his hands five times afterwards."

The voice of this praiser of Rabd-al-Hoosi struck my ear as a familiar sound. I turned, and recognising in the short, squat figure of the speaker Mirza Kufa, the Parsee of Aden—the renegade from the creed of Zoroaster, with his bright ferret eyes keenly fixed on me—I wheeled round and rode hurriedly off.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

TIDINGS OF CECIL!

THE conviction that I had been recognised by this man made me more than ever anxious to reach the sanctuary of Rabd-al-Hoosi's mansion, and learn from him what all this too evident alarm in Sana meant, and why our troops had marched so far into Yemen, as the destruction of those towns mentioned by the kabobki seemed to indicate.

It seemed strange to believe that again I was in Sana, "the centre of the universe," and of tyranny too; and fearing that the horse I rode might lead to some discovery, if it was really the property of Ali Badr, I buckled the bridle to a tree as I passed through the maidan, or park, where the horsemen practised with their spears and rode at the ring. There I left him, and after stroking his beautiful head by way of farewell took my way straight to the house of the vizier, who, by this time I was certain, must have returned from the mosque. My plumed cap, with its flap of mail, my chain-shirt and long sword, brass pistol, and costly silk drawers, together with a most voluminous beard and pair of mustachios, impressed the slaves of the vizier's household with sentiments of the most profound respect; and thus I was at once ushered into the same apartment where Fred Langley and I had waited for him before; for now I was informed that his mightiness was among the ladies in his *anderûn*.

I seated myself on one of the folded carpets of thick felt which formed the chairs of the apartment, and it seemed to revolve, while the light of the perfumed lamps danced before my eyes like *ignes fatui*, so weak had I now become. I know not how the slaves had announced me to Rabd-al-Hoosi, but he came in a great hurry from his *anderûn*, with his hands and beard freshly dyed, and his immense muslin turban somewhat awry; for the beautiful star of turquoises from Khorassan (worn as a charm from the evil eye) was all on one side. He made a profound salute, supposing me to be an officer of the sultan's troops, at least.

"Peace be unto thee," said he three times in Arabic.

"Rabd-al-Hoosi," said I, springing towards him, and taking both his hands in mine, "let us have no more of this Arabian rubbish, but let us speak in our own mother tongue. I am your former friend, Hilton—Mr. Hilton, of 'the Queen's Own;' I have escaped from death under the most terrible circumstances—death in the far desert of the Mahrahs, to which I had been conveyed by Khaled Ibn Khozaid, an infernal Bedouin, whose prisoner I had unfortunately become. I have again reached Sana, disguised as you see me, on

know. I have no hope but in you, and thus I have sought your house, but, be assured, less to thank you for past services than to crave succour and protection now. I cast myself upon you, and know that I shall not be deceived!"

Fear and astonishment, not unmixed by a shade of anger, were visible in the face of the vizier as I poured out all this at a breath, and again sank on the seat beside me, for I felt weak as a child.

"This is a mere frenzy, and will end in the destruction of both, perhaps, but most certainly of yourself," said he. "Prepare, sir, for the worst; from my soul I pity you, for your dangerous expedition has been in vain."

A myriad of stars seemed to dance before my eyes at these terrible words, which crushed me, as it were, to the earth, for they imported I knew not what.

"Then Cecil—my poor Cecil—is dead," I moaned; "at rest, at least, where none can trouble her."

"No, no; Heaven forbid," said Rabd-al-Hoosi, hurriedly. "You mistake me; I mean that in the *anderûn* of the *imaum* she is as if dead to you, and placed for ever beyond the reach of all, as surely as if she were in yonder planet."

"It is impossible! it is incredible!" I cried, starting up, and shaking my sword in its scabbard. "God will never permit such wickedness—such monstrous cruelty. Where is this accursed seraglio? I will reach it were it thrice the height of *Hesn-al-Mouhaub*, and drag her from among the wretches there. Oh, that I was now as near your *imaum* as when I had his beard within my grasp!"

Though we spoke in our own language, the renegade Scot gazed about him in terror at these words; but nature was now exhausted within me. The light left my eyes; I tottered on the floor, and remember no more of that painful interview.

On consciousness returning I found myself in a luxurious bed, under a beautiful canopy, and in a small but richly-decorated apartment, through the painted and latticed windows of which the moon was shining so brightly as to compete for mastery with the light of a silver lamp having two burners, which stood upon a gilded stool close by; and thereon were two china bowls, one filled with cool sherbet, and the other with a preparation of milk, together with a silver salver, wherein were grapes and the luscious pomegranates of Lower Egypt with their dark brown rinds. I saw all this, when, after lying long in a species of maze, I drew back the soft rich curtains, and perceived in the middle of the floor, on which was spread a rich Persian carpet, the Arab accoutrements in which I had come from Galbara, together with a beautiful hookah, or water-pipe, of Turkish workmanship.

Near these sat a little slave-girl, black as ebony, but clad entirely in snow-white muslin. Thrice I addressed her, without receiving a reply. On the third question she pointed to her open and empty mouth, and I turned away with pity, for, like too many of these poor

Abyssinians, she was a mute. I was, then, in one of the private apartments of the vizier's house, as he informed me when he appeared again, and, with a countenance expressive both of kindness and anxiety (*i.e.*, kindness to me and anxiety for himself), as he had the greatest dread of being involved through me in some terrible scrape.

A whole day had passed during which I had been partly unconscious, for a fever possessed me. This was now my second night in Sana, yet he dared not bring a *hakim* (or doctor) to see me, for I had been incessantly threatening vengeance against the "holy imaum." Rabd felt my pulse, and declared that fever was abating: he handed to me the sherbet, and I drank like one who had not seen water for a month. He lighted his hookah, made a sign with his finger that he wished to converse with me, and the poor little slave disappeared.

I felt so weak, crushed, powerless, and miserable, that it would have been the greatest relief to my overloaded breast if I could have wept. My host saw how deeply I was moved, as I lay pale and languid on my pillow, and placing a hand kindly on my head, he said, while patting it,—

"Fling your sorrows into the deep waters of oblivion, smoke the pipe of peace, and take matters quietly."

"Quietly?" I reiterated. "You speak more like the Mussulman you pretend to be than the honest Briton you are."

"I speak as your friend," said he, drawing a bottle of the forbidden wine from his ample breeches, and helping himself liberally to its contents in a china cup, "what would you—what *can* you do? Dash your head against the rock of the seraglio? Rush into the divan, sword in hand, and take the imaum by the beard? You might do both; but would you be the better for it, or would poor Miss Marchmont be one inch nearer liberty? I should think not. Where, then, is the utility of fretting," he continued, as I groaned deeply; "a time may come for essaying something wiser. Baba Senna!—I mean, Good God—Mr. Hilton—my dear sir—*do* take matters quietly!"

"You conducted Cecil straight to Sana, I suppose, after you left me at——"

"After *you* left us—yes, straight as an arrow flies."

"Did you see her face—or learn how she looked?"

"See her! Save the imaum no man can look upon her face without incurring the penalty of death. The imaum came, himself, a few leagues to meet us, and she was conducted into the capital by a magnificent retinue, such as Sana has not witnessed since his ascension of the throne. First, came four-and-twenty drummers and as many players on the cymbal and Arabian horn; then came five hundred horsemen of the guard under Mahmoud Ali, all riding with their turbans flowing and tufted spears uplifted; a thousand soldiers on foot with their muskets and spears; then came four-and-twenty banners; on one was painted the great double-bladed sword of the Prophet, the rest were inscribed by the titles of the holy imaum.

Then came twenty-four magnificent umbrellas of state, each borne by an emir, with the royal cupboard of plate; then old Yacoob, the diviner, mounted on a snow-white ass, then seven slaves strewing the way with flowers, before a train of mollahs, dervishes and calendars, all riding on asses, brandishing their bludgeons and calabashes, while they shouted "Allah ho Ackbar!" at the top of their throats. Then Baba Booli, the chief executioner, with a head freshly cut off, borne on a spear before him; then came a band of black eunuchs, under Osman Oglou, all riding in white dresses with shields, spears, pistols, and cimitars, escorting the plumed dromedary, on the back of which was our poor prisoner, in a curtained cage, the hangings of which were of carnation coloured silk, embroidered with stars of gold, silver, and precious stones; and now she is in the seraglio, which crowns the brow of a rock, visible from these windows."

Here I would have staggered from bed to look at the place, but Rabd kindly and forcibly detained me.

"Stay—stay—to face the dew of night in your present fevered state! you are stark mad, sir. There she has been for the last fortnight, and, I regret to say, has not enjoyed the best of health."

"She has been ill?"

"I do not exactly say—ill——"

"O send, ask for me; discover in some way! Dear, dear, Cecil—ill—ill, dying, perhaps, and I am fettered here by sickness."

"Raving again; *ask* indeed! How, sir! do you not know that it is more than even a vizier's beard is worth, to ask after the wife or slave of the meanest mule-driver in Yemen; then what would be the punishment of one who presumed even to remember that the imaum has women in his seraglio? Sir, you know not the ways of the land. Remember the old saw about Rome; so we must even do in Yemen as the Yemenees do. She has been ill, for so the hakim of the court (who is in some manner my friend) told me; and I fear that the ink washed off the written charms of dervishes and mollahs, and which he has insisted on her swallowing, have not tended much to effect her cure."

"Is this hakim or doctor esteemed as a man of skill?"

"No—he is a pitiful old quack, who studies the signs of the zodiac, and believes in charms and spells. Besides, it is not the custom here for doctors to *see* a female patient, she is closely veiled and has her arm covered with fine silk, through which he must detect the beating of her pulse, and hear all her complaints with eyes closed and head respectfully averted. This hakim is a pupil of the Seyd Abu Beer, and is, moreover, a poisoner; one of my predecessors was removed by him from this earth to paradise, (*paradise!*) where I hope he now tastes immortal joys."

"How was this, and why?"

"He was discovered to be leaguering with the sultans of Shugra and Lahadj against the imaum, who secretly desired the hakim to

rub him with a linen cloth, when next he used the hot-bath, and so he died in ten minutes, as black as a Nubian."

"A sudden death!"

"Very; the cloth was strongly impregnated with a deadly poison, so we tied his toes together—laid his feet towards Mecca—mumbled the Koran over him, and there was an end of it."

"To-morrow I will examine the rocks of this seraglio, and if they are high as Ben Nevis I will climb them. O Cecil, Cecil, if I had you here to-night, twelve hours more should find us safe in Aden."

"Indeed!" said Rabd-al-Hoosi, draining the last drop of his forbidden beverage, "then you would require the power of the Prophet when he went from his bed in one night to heaven and back again, without being once missed from the side of his well-beloved spouse Ayesha—and this is a Moslem festival—the twentieth night of Rajeb. But I have one piece of good tidings for you. It is rumoured that the love of the imaum has suddenly grown cold; thus the people suppose that his beautiful Frankish slave has lost the enchanted talisman by which she procured his undivided regard so long."

I made some response expressive of more bitterness than compliment to his royal master.

Rabd whiffed away at his hookah, but as usual, looked somewhat uneasy when such remarks were made, for such is the force of habit, and such are the terrors of unbridled despotism; he then added,

"Such is the report spread by the female slaves of the household in the coffee bazaars and silk bezesteins. They even say that he hates her, and that she has caused both the destruction of his beautiful Castle of the Graces and this daring march of the British troops into Yemen."

"O," cried I, clenching my hands above my head; "were I only as near him as I was once!"

"For Heaven's sake, hush! do not raise your voice thus."

"So the wretch hates her now. Well, that at least is pleasant intelligence."

"Well, of that I am not so certain, for this change of sentiment may bring evil in its train too; the people of Sana have resumed their murmurs against her, and in the bazaars and caravanserais, and on the maidan, they openly urge that she should be put to death for all the turmoil and mischief she has occasioned; and the der-vishes imprecate curses on the Bedouins who first brought her among us from the seashore. Besides, an execution would be a popular exhibition," continued Rabd, by force of habit resuming his Oriental immobility of eye, air, and voice, as he concealed the empty bottle; "it is a whole month since a thief has been bowstrung, or a wine-bibber's beard plucked out by the roots; a week since a traitor has been impaled or a coiner sawn in two, or any one blown from the mouth of a mortar, for anything, or for nothing (for that is nearly the same to the clear-seeing eyes of the Corner-stone of all earthly Wisdom). hence the good people of Sana are impatient that her

execution—murder—(yes, of course it is a murder)"—he added, or seeing the fierce start I gave, "should take place in public before the gate of the great mosque; but that is impossible, for the women of the seraglio are always put to death in private—in secret—they disappear under the cloud of night, with no eyes to see the terrible act but the stars."

"And of God," I cried, with a burst of fervour; "and with His aid I will save Cecil or die with her!"

I now perceived that his eminence the vizier was somewhat tipsy, which might account for the cruel circumlocution and verbosity of manner in which he acquainted me with the dangers that menaced all I had left in this world to love; but he had been so nursed, inured, and hardened into cruelty and misbelief of human feeling, by long residence in Sana, that perhaps it was less his fault than his misfortune.

The clatter of female slippers and the sound of voices in his andarûn, now made him remember that it was high time he was retiring, and he left me for the night, after carefully double-locking my door and taking away the key, for he had the double fear of my being discovered by some member of his numerous household, who might *not* be a mute, and of my committing some dangerous extravagance during my feverish and excited state.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

A ROGUE CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

NEXT day I was more composed; a partial night's rest and the conviction—the desperate conviction—that I *must* imperatively get well, or all would be lost, compelled me to restrain thought and action as much as possible, and I occupied myself in quietly weaving a thousand plans for Cecil's freedom.

I had before this seen the palace of the imaum, and now I gazed at it again and again from the window of my room; and when I saw its painted casements, its walls of white chunam, and its latticed galleries shining in the morning sun, I had no doubt of being able to surmount its enclosures with ease, for to the ardent all things are possible. When a boy I had climbed higher rocks to rob the solan goose of her eggs, and had scaled higher walls to get at old Dominie Denholm's apples and apricots, and now I was not to be balked by the fear of a bullet or arrow.

But my hopes were fanned and my courage raised beyond description by the tidings which Rabd-al-Hoosi, not without considerable perturbation, now imparted to me; they were these.

To anticipate a projected general invasion of our new settlement, the officer commanding at Aden had declared open war against the sultans of Sana and Lahadj, as abettors of Mohamed-al-Raschid,

and those wandering tribes who had waged without ceasing an annoying partisan strife against us, and whose followers had committed so many atrocities and assassinations of sentinels and stray soldiers, that such a state of things could no longer be borne. Colonel O'Hara had, therefore, marched into Yemen, driving before him the horsemen of Lahadj. He had with him the whole of "the Queen's Own;" the right wing of the 6th (or 1st Royal Warwickshire); some companies of the 17th (or Leicestershire) Regiment, and the 10th battalion of Native Infantry, with several pieces of artillery belonging to the Queen's and Company's service, under Major Dreghorn. As already stated, he had attacked and destroyed Sheikh Medi and Sheikh Othman, and routing all before him, would soon be at the gates of Sana; thus the Corner-stone of Wisdom was in the greatest trepidation; though many were flocking to his standard, such as the Emir Mohamed with all his Abdali; Ahmed of Shugra with all his wild Futhalis; the Sheikh Ibrahim with his Bedouins; the Princess of Kaa-el-Bun, and even the venerable Sheikh Abdulmelik. All these had mustered their horsemen to oppose the progress of the British, while the old santon or haji Nouredin had left for ever his desecrated grotto in the Granite hills, and was everywhere summoning all who had one grain of faith in their hearts, to engage in a general war of extermination against all the Kafirs of the earth, the undoubted progeny of Eblis. In four days, the obnoxious British were expected before Sana; all the troops of the sultan, with every man he could collect, were in and around the city; his firmauns gave the Yemenees the pleasant alternative of battle or the bowstring; while the fiery discourses of the sage Nouredin vaunted the happiness, the blessings, and the glories of Paradise; the sweet waters of which, the fruits of the Toaba, the couches of pearl, the beautiful houri with their high bosoms and melting black eyes, the pillows of musk, and all the splendours of the *Jannat al Ferdaws*, he promised away to all and sundry as if they had been his own peculiar property, and perfectly at his disposal.

On the other hand, if their courage sank, he threatened to stone them as sūfees (or freethinkers), assured them of eternal perdition in the world to come; and as he was one of those cunning fellows who can make the people believe anything, he urged the old sultan to lead the host himself, saying, that he had but to draw his sword, and it would be mighty in battle as Zulfacker, the falchion which the Prophet received from the angel Gabriel. He did not preach altogether in vain, for long before the British drums awoke the echoes of Mount Nikkum, more than 5000 Arabs had picqueted their horses in the Maidaun of Sana, while double that number of lances and matchlocks reflected back the sunshine from the walls and streets of the city.

I writhed with impatience on my sick bed, when Rabd-al-Hoosi informed me of these warlike preparations, which he did with all the

air of a man who was worn and harassed almost to death by the petulance, wrath, and absurdity of the despot, at every wag of whose beard the whole of Yemen trembled. On the following evening he entered my chamber, and his whole face betrayed the greatest alarm.

"You have been discovered," said he; "and your presence in Sana is known to the imaum!"

"Then Heaven help poor Cecil, for I am lost!" said I.

"On entering the city, did you tarry for a moment at the booth of a kabobki?"

"For one moment only."

"Then that unlucky moment has undone us all! a wretched dog of a Parsee was standing there; a man who has twice turned renegade, and had his beard torn from his chin by the Emir Mohamed for theft; he recognised you, and informed the chief executioner, whose officers are in search of you everywhere; a thousand pieces of gold are offered for your head, and twice that number to him who will bring you alive to the feet of Solyman, who proposes to make use of you in deceiving the outposts of Colonel O'Hara, for the British troops are foredoomed to a general massacre, and the ears of half the city may be cropped if you are not found in four-and-twenty hours, so says the Centre of the Earth!"

I remained silent for some time after these startling tidings were announced to me, for this recognition by the bankrupt hotel-keeper would greatly increase the difficulties of my position, and lessen the chance of achieving anything for Cecil, if it did not—but this crushing idea was too terrible to entertain for an instant—excite the cupidity of Rabd-al-Hoosi himself, to win the two thousand gold pieces, the favour of the sultan, and the people's good-will, by delivering me over to the mercies of the chief executioner.

As I looked on the broad, sunburned, and somewhat good-humoured face of the Scoto-Mussulman I could see nothing there to justify my momentary and unworthy suspicion, so I gladly thrust it from me.

"Do not be alarmed," said he, kindly, on perceiving that I seemed nearly overwhelmed by his tidings, "for here you are as safe as if in the bowels of the earth; here none can enter, for the passage to this apartment lies directly through my—my anderûn, and its windows overlook the gardens of my house. You are perfectly secure, and in three or four days will be quite well. Then we will talk over our plans.

I sighed bitterly, as I tossed from side to side of my bed, and the mere action of my restlessness and excited mind continued to keep my body in a weak and feverish state. Though I was so unwell, still he dared not send for a hakim; thus nature was fortunately left to herself, and to work her own cure, without the obstruction of quackery, charm, or spell.

He gave me a soothing sleeping-draught, which he assured me was

prepared by a skilful female slave, and was potent in its effect. Placing this upon the little tabouret by my bedside, he left me for the night, and, as usual, carefully locked the door of my room.

The atmosphere was so close and warm that I extinguished one of the burners of my lamp, and lay pondering on the strangeness of my fate and peculiarity of my adventures for the last few months, and mingling these reminiscences with many a fervent hope, or prayer, that the same protecting power, which had spared me when so many stronger and better men, had fallen by the bullet and cholera during the early years of my Indian service, would yet preserve me among the perils that environed me now. The painted casement of my chamber stood open, and stretching far away, I saw the flat-roofed houses, the green gardens, and gilded kiosks of Sana, sleeping in the clear, broad, cloudless moonlight, which fell like a shower of liquid silver on the scenery.

The pure sky threw forward the outline of Mount Nikkum, with its ruined castle of the Osmanli wars, and all the other hills of Sana in strong but green relief from its depth of glittering blue. The Shab shone like a silver snake, as it wound through its stony vale, while from among the gardens and vineyards, the orange, plum, and pomegranate groves, the old engirding and embattled walls and towers of the city stood forth in flakes of light that threw their shadows on the ground beyond; and chief of all, amid a thousand terraced dwellings, the great dome of the principal mosque rose darkly up, with all its tall and slender minarets, that glittered like the points of burnished spears.

Soothed by hope and by the purity and beauty of the night, while a soft and drowsy sensation stole over my limbs and pressed my eyelids down, I was about to drop into that deep sleep which my powerful narcotic was to procure, when a sound aroused me. I started—looked up, and perceived a man suspended as it were from the apex of the oval arch of the centre window, which stood open, and the dark, opaque outline of his figure, as it swung to and fro, was defined distinctly against the bright blue of the sky beyond.

Though nearly overpowered by the combined effects of natural and artificial sleep, I raised myself upon my hands to watch this extraordinary apparition, which, after hanging by its arms for a moment, dropped upon the wooden balcony before the open window, and entered softly and stealthily. The intruder fixed his black and shining eyes on mine intently. He wore a red fez and a loose blue Arab shirt; his feet were bare, but in his girdle were a coarse horn-hafted jambea and a Turkish pistol. In his broad, sturdy figure, square shoulders, large hands, and stealthy ferret eyes I recognised my former acquaintance the Guebre—the Parsee, who had so fatally recognised me at the booth of the kabobki; but he had lost much of his ancient paunch, and now appeared much taller, stronger, and more athletic than I ever believed him to be.

"Villain—thief—hypocrite—begone, or I will cry for help, and dash this stool at your head!"

"You no do any sing half so foolish, Sahib," said he, in his broken English, while he insolently drained my cup of sherbet before my face. "You know me, eh?—Mirza Kufa, who kept the bungalow, the shop, the saloon at Aden, and sold kabobs, coffee, and pale ale to the officers—oh, very goot that, while it lasted; but me am bankrupt now, and can pass the Turkish wall no more, so a fortune must be made here. Door fast, eh?—goot, very goot!"

While speaking thus, with many a deep chuckle, he made a tour of the apartment, and after finding that the door was really secured on the outside, he pocketed various pretty trifles that lay within his reach, and then addressed himself to me in the dogged yet jocular and determined manner of the Abdali when drugged with opium for the commission of outrage, or drunk with that intoxicating liquor which the Jews of Aden distil from raisins. My friend the Guebre had too evidently drugged himself to deaden all sense of danger. Perceiving that I was preparing to spring from bed, he drew his jambea, and levelling the cocked pistol straight at my head, said,—

"Keep quiet, Sahib—be still, or I shall make you lie still enough. Hah, hah!" he added, with a broad grin, as he saw me again sink powerlessly down on my pillow, where I closed my eyes, and thought for a moment it must be all a dream. "Dat so, Sahib; be sure, if you make de smallest noise, by my *sowgund*! I will shoot you dead, and escape de way I came."

"In Heaven's name, fellow, what do you want?" I asked, with a sigh of bitterness and anger.

"Sahib knows that his presence here in Sana is obnoxious to its holy inaum, de pillar ob Islam, (may it be smothered in ashes!) and he has offered a tousand piece of gold for your head, and two tousand piece of gold to him who brings you before him alive; for he has a purpose in hand—to betray and destroy the Faringis. Goot, goot! very right!"

"Well, well—all this I know; but what do you want?"

"Either the tousand or the two tousand piece ob gold—ah, you comprehend, Sahib?" said he, with a grin from ear to ear, while my blood ran cold, for I was powerless, unarmed, with my bare hands opposed to his poniard and pistol. Moreover, I was weak and sinking fast under that powerful drug, which even while I spoke was pressing my eyelids down, and robbing me of my energy.

In my breast I felt for a moment all the agony of life—young and active life—struggling with approaching death, and the conviction that Cecil would be for ever abandoned to her wretched fate if I perished in a cold-blooded murder, under the hands of this relentless and avaricious fire-worshipper. A gush of bitterness swelled within me. It seemed as if my tortures were to have no end but with life.

After grinning for a time, and apparently enjoying my misery, the Guebre said, in broken English,—

"I not mean to cut off head, Sahib, if I can help it—oh, no; for den I would get only tousand piece of gold from de Lion of Arabia; by half-strangling you, and carrying you away, I will get de two tousand, and be great—rich—happy, for life. You see, Sahib, dat it—all right, very goot! And by de soul of him who was washed in silver! here is a hook for my cord—ze very ting!"

He pointed to a strong hook, about a foot long, which depended from a beam of the painted ceiling, and from which, at one time, a large lamp had evidently hung. Mirza now produced a smoothly-greased cord from a pocket of his ample drawers.

"Hee—hee—hee! I will be able to pull you up to de hook, and after you have hung dere fifteen minutes, you will keep quiet enough till lowered into de street and delivered to de soldier of de Dola; and den de two tousand piece of gold am mine—mine! very goot—Clibber Mirza Kufa, you shall be extolled above all de kadis, muftis, emirs, and sheikhs in Yemen! What will the mufti and the mustahid say, when I appear before dem with my prisoner? Goot—very goot."

I leave the reader to imagine my feelings, while the wretch so cruelly unfolded his plans and expectations. He seemed to enjoy the agony he created, and to exult in the triumph that arms, health, and strength gave him over one who was without them, defenceless, ill, and weak. After he had grinned for a time, a change came over his features, they grew stern and contracted; his teeth were closed, his mouth compressed, his brows knit and his eyes gleamed with a red ferocious glare. He came close to me with the cord looped in his hand, saying,—

"Our destinies are all written, Sahib; it is yours to die for my benefit and gain; very goot! Oh, ho—dis is a fine couch for a Frank—a dog, and a dog's son; a fadder of cats—your unclean modder nebber dreamed of such tings when she bore you."

He now approached, as if to throw a loop of the greased cord round my neck. Enraged and full of desperation, yet not daring to summon any succour, I grasped a pillow, the only thing at hand, and now the wretch drew back, for I believe that the expression of my face awed him. He drew forth his pistol, and then his knife again, but relinquished both, for to use either might cause an alarm, and deprive him even of the thousand pieces, if not of all reward.

He now fixed his eyes upon the hook in the ceiling, and after three efforts succeeded in throwing the rope over it; but in doing so, it became knotted. He tugged and tugged again, but it became tighter and more firm at every pull. Running to the dressing-table, he placed it directly beneath the hook, and by setting a little tabouret thereon, he was enabled to reach it by stretching his hands upwards: and while still keeping his ferret eyes on me, he hurriedly

endeavoured, but in vain, to untie the cord. His intention was no doubt to fling the loop at the other end, lasso-wise, around my neck, and so to drag me out of bed, where I sat a feeble and powerless spectator of his horrible preparations.

By his exertions the stool slipped from under him and fell to the floor; then he sank heavily forward, with his face upon the sharp steel hook, which caught him by the inner edge of the chin, and there he swung by the lower jaw, like a huge fish, and in his agony he kicked away the little table, or pedestal, which made his case more desperate than ever. It was a sudden and a terrible retribution!

The hook was strong, and bore him bravely, notwithstanding his weight, and all his struggles, which were frightful. The blood flowed at first in a torrent through his loose dress, and then in clots, drop by drop, heavily, thickly, and curdling, from his lacerated throat; but not the faintest cry could escape him, for his face was thrust upward against the ceiling; his teeth were locked, as if by a vice of iron, and his jaw must have possessed more than common strength or it would infallibly have been torn from its sockets by the mere weight of his body and the energy of his silent but convulsive struggles to relieve himself.

But these were in vain, and there he swung, till all power ceased within him; the horrid gurgling in his throat and nostrils passed away, the plashing drops fell more slowly into the crimson pool below—at last they ceased entirely, and the body vibrated no longer; but there it continued to hang, beside the fatal cord, with clenched and stiffened hands, and in his girdle the knife and pistol by which my life had been so lately threatened.

There it swung before my closing eyes, and thrice, when just about to sleep, a convulsive writhe of its limbs, or a last feeble snort in the nostrils, announced that life yet lingered in the lungs of the wretched Parsee.

To me it was all like a hideous nightmare!

At last the effect of the narcotic could no longer be resisted. Sleep—heavy, deep, and dreamless sleep—descended upon me, and I became oblivious of everything.

* * * * *

The astonishment of Rabd-al-Hoosi, on entering my room early next morning, and finding a torrent of blood upon the floor, with a man suspended over it by the chin from the lamp hook, may be easily imagined. For a time he stood like one transfixed, gazing, with open mouth, alternately upon the body and the pool of blood below it. Then he sprang to the side of my couch and found me still buried in a deep slumber. Drawing round the curtains to conceal me, he summoned several mutes, who cleansed the place from blood and removed the body. On being taken down, it was found that life yet lingered in it; but Rabd was wisely fearful of any revelations being made by the Parsee (whom he at once recognised), and ordered

his head to be struck off as a common thief. This was at once done, and before he was sufficiently recovered to utter a sound, and thus the tongue of my most dangerous enemy in Sana was silenced for ever, by one stroke of the cimitar of the headsman, which concluded what Azrael, the angel of death, had so fortunately begun by the iron hook.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

I TURN DERVISH.

THE sleeping-draught had so greatly restored my strength, that on waking about noon that day I felt myself almost well. My surprise was great on finding every trace of the last night's horrible occurrence removed; and it was not until Rabd-al-Hoosi visited me again that I was assured it had not been all a dream.

Winter, or what is termed winter in that land of sunshine, flowers, perfume, and precious stones, had now passed away. The hot and sultry spring was nigh, and at night the people of Sana conveyed their mattresses to the flat roofs of the city. Rabd-al-Hoosi spread mine on the flat terrace of his own mansion, which was one of the loftiest in that quarter of the capital; thus no one could overlook me, although I could overlook many preparing their couches in the evening or rolling them up in the morning, among the rows of beautiful china vases and gorgeous flowers which decorated the balustrades. However, my open air naps were always short; for the chatter of the vizier's wives and female slaves, who slept on a broad terrace below me, continued without a moment's intermission until the night was far advanced; and I was wakened early by the sunbeams shining into my eyes, or by the shrill voice of the muezzins summoning the city to morning prayer from the slender minarets of the adjacent mosque. Then I rose and folded up my couch, and would sit for hours gazing at the distant palace of the sultan and the square mass of the lofty seraglio, which crowned the summit of a rock, that was defended by cannon, and encircled at its base by the waters of the Shab.

One morning just as the vizier came to visit me, the boom of a cannon pealed through the calm sky over the flat roofs of the city, and we saw a wreath of white smoke float away from the platform of brass guns encircling the seraglio; then followed the roaring of gongs with the beating of Arab drums, and by Osman Oglou, the chief eunuch (whose jaws were still swathed in bandages), the vizier was summoned in great haste, for one of the principal beauties of the royal household had suddenly died of poison, and the muftis, kadis, police officers, the royal hakim and Yacoob, the diviner, were all required to assist the Corner-stone of Wisdom in discovering the culprit; and rather than he or she should escape, his majesty was rowing by every hair in his beard, to cut off every head in the palace.

Until the return of Rabd, I remained in a state of mind not to be envied, for full and fast a thousand stories of the cruelties and jealousies so common in the seraglio crowded on my memory; and I dreaded that like many a beauty I had read of, Cecil Marchmont might have fallen a victim to the subtlety of some revengeful Banon Harem or neglected odalisque.

A lady of the seraglio had been found dead in her bath, the water of which was supposed to have been poisoned, for her body was livid and swollen beyond all conception, and the imaum's wrath was great; for Osman Oglou had paid two purses for her only six months before in the Mocha market, and she was the roundest damsel the Sultan had seen, and until Cecil's arrival, he was wont to style her "the moon of his palace—the woman of all women." To maintain the respect which was due to him, two or three heads were sliced off, and several eunuchs had their feet bastinadoed to a jelly; the bodies were buried under the tall cypresses at the foot of the palace rock, and before nightfall the people of Sana had forgotten all about it.

The real culprit was shrewdly suspected to be a beautiful Persian; but as she played melodiously on the barbiton, and the imaum could not supply her place, she escaped with her head on her shoulders.

A week slipped away; at the end of it I felt myself well and strong, and the necessity for action—a conviction which Rabd-al-Hoosi had rather nervously endeavoured to waive and put off, now forced itself upon me. By this time the city was full of troops, and from the housetop I saw every day either my old friend, the Emir Mohamed, with Jaffer and Kior Ibn Kogia riding close behind him, the dare-devil Mahmoud Ali Badr and the Sultan of Shugra, all in their chain shirts, with prancing steeds and tufted spears, or the old Sheikh Abdulmelik, muffled in his Cashmere shawls and stripped barracan, perched between the humps of his solemn-looking dromedary, traversing the streets about the imaum's palace, the great mosque, or the maidaun, where every day their horsemen were practising with their lances and matchlocks; while with their shutternails the camel artillerymen fired round shot at the house of a wealthy Jew, which they very naturally and properly selected as an object whereon to try their skill.

The city gates had been strengthened and every preparation made to receive the infidels, against whom Rabd-al-Hoosi was to take the command of all the imaum's troops, for he was universally looked up to as "the Zuafacker of valour, the shield of Sana, and mirror of wisdom;" when one fine morning, just as the gates of the caravan-serais, of the bazaars, and bezesteins were being opened, just when the muezzins were screaming as usual from the minarets, when the bearded keepers of coffee and kabob shops were taking off their shutters, and when the itinerant sellers of sherbet and makers of nails were lighting their charcoal pans at the street corners—the mother of cannons—a great gun, which stood on the battery of the

seraglio, poured its thunder over the alarmed city, and the holy banner of the imaum, with its crescent and double-bladed sword, was seen to wave from the upper battlements of the palace!

Then every throat in Sana sent up a cry, and the notes of preparation rang in every street. Matchlocks and shuternauls were loaded; steel shirts and caps, barracans and turbans, spears and round bucklers crowded on the green maidaun, and the girths were buckled on horse, on mule, and dromedary, while dancing dervishes, fakirs, calendars, and santons, rushed to the mosques to count their beads, to prostrate themselves towards the Keblah, and call down the vengeance of the Prophet on our poor Colonel O'Hara, who was stigmatized as the "unsainted Dola of Aden—the father of all asses—for daring to provoke the wrath of the Imaum Solyman."

From the summit of the vizier's house, in the bright morning sunshine, I could see afar off on the heights above the city, the gleam of arms, as the musket barrels and keen bayonets glanced in the light, with that steady radiance which always indicates the advance of troops; and now my long oppressed heart began to expand with dawning hope and joy.

In a little time I could see the colours waving, and counted six pairs, thus indicating that three regiments—or at least, their right wings—were approaching, and they marched through the broad stony vale in subdivisions, with a brigade of horse artillery in front.

Then the mass of red coats (that old familiar garb so dear to me) became visible, as it formed in position on the ridge that overlooked the city, in close column of companies at quarter distance; and then as the cannon were wheeled round, the horses untraced, and the tumbrils unlimbered, I saw one bright flash pass along the columns as all the arms were "ordered," and the men "stood at ease."

A cloud of horsemen, the wild and reckless Abdali, led by Mohamed in person, all vowing by every hair in the beards of the twelve imaums, to cut the Kafirs into the smallest of kabobs, poured from the eastern gate along the valley, shouting the *tecbir*, and brandishing their long and reed-like lances; but three flashes broke from the green hill-side on which the British were posted; three wreaths of smoke with loud reports succeeded, and a shower of grape-shot in one moment sent the foremost files of the Abdali to the glories of paradise. On this, the whole retired in the utmost confusion into the town, followed by a host of cheering skirmishers, whom, by their facings and the green pompons in their shackos, I recognised to be the Light Company of my own corps,—*the Queen's*.

As the Arabs galloped through the street to their bivouac on the maidaun, I saw them, in the exuberance of their rage and valour, spear some miserable Jews who happened to be in their way; but (as Rabd-al-Hoosi coolly told me) this might have been done "merely to keep their hands in practice."

Doubtful of his ability to attack Sana when occupied by so many fierce and fanatical soldiers, and being anxious to bring the imaum

to terms by diplomacy or intimidation, O'Hara began to intrench his forces on the heights, and posted several field-pieces in such a manner as to command the whole length of the greatest thoroughfares and the principal parts of the city. A flag of truce which he sent towards the eastern gate had been barbarously fired on by the soldiers there; so after replying by a few cannon shots, while his trenches and battery progressed, the colonel posted a chain of advanced picquets and sentinels at the base of the hill, the only approach to which was through the stony valley and in front of the town. All these sentinels were doubled at night, a most necessary precaution against assassination, for the imaum had proclaimed a reward of three pieces of gold for every *Ingleez* head that was brought to the foot of his throne; and repeatedly he threatened to crop the vizier's ears, because a pile of heads had not appeared before his palace-gate every morning.

Meanwhile the provisions which usually flowed into the capital from Beitel Fakih and other fertile districts, were intercepted by the red-coated infidels, and a long train of camels bearing coffee and wine from Moffak (a city on a steep mountain about thirty miles south-west of Sana), after being long and anxiously looked for by the merchants in the great bazaar, was stopped in sight of the city; the spearmen of the Dola of Moffak were routed, and the camels were stripped of everything. One of the drivers who reached Sana in great tribulation, minus fez and cummerbund, related that this was done by a tall infidel named the Capoudan Of-el-Anagan, who mockingly told him, "to go and be hanged, and to charge double for the next load he took to Sana;" and who reviled the imaum, and drank the wine like an unclean beast, before his very beard!

As this wine was for the use of the seraglio, and for various medicinal purposes, the sultan ordered that the tall Kafir Capoudan should be blown from the mouth of a mortar—previous to which, as the vizier ventured to suggest, it would be necessary to catch him.

In the evening after this occurrence, Rabd-al-Hoosi (for whom I had been waiting all day with the greatest impatience to announce that the moment for action had now arrived, and that I felt well and strong) returned from the palace, looking jaded, weary, and wan, for his life had now become a burden to him, owing to the tyranny, caprice, and absurdity of Solyman, who had sworn "by the fig and olive," his most binding vow, to place his—the vizier's head—on Sana's highest minar, if the infidel Faringis were not destroyed by battle or stratagem before another moon.

The Emir Mohamed, the sheikhs of the Bedouins and Futhals, Mahmoud Ali, and other nakibs of the sultan's troops, with the emir of the camel artillery, after a long consultation over pipes and coffee, had agreed upon a plan of attack, which simply consisted in having all the British sentinels assassinated at midnight by Abdali warriors, duly drugged with opium and hempseed, after which the

whole troops of Sana, led by the vizier in person, should make a general attack on the position, and massacre all in the tents and trenches.

There was a pause for a minute, after Rabd, who was greatly excited, related this resolution to me.

"You see," said he, "the fine piece of work my evil fortune has cut out for me."

"And at what time does this attack take place?"

"On the first midnight, or first dark hour in which Yacoob the diviner discovers a conjunction of the planets favourable to the event."

"O'Hara must be informed of all this!" said I, starting up.

"Impossible, the guards and gates——"

"I must! what, would you have me linger here while this awful butchery is impending?"

"No, no, but——"

"But what?" I asked, with energy; "you cannot mean to lead these brown barbarians against your own countrymen—for here, at least, both Englishmen and Irishmen are such."

"No, Mr. Hilton; no sir, you might know me better," said he reproachfully; "I would rather be torn in pieces. But there is no need for either; the hour is come that I have long foreseen, when this oppressive dignity and dangerous post would prove too heavy for me at last; so the imaum and I must e'en part company."

"Suppose that Sana is attacked by O'Hara," said I, "is there any way by which our soldiers can reach the palace otherwise than by the great street?"

"It would matter little, for if the seraglio is attacked, every woman in it will be immediately strangled or beheaded, by Osman Oglou and Baba Booli."

"Wherefore!" I asked, full of horror.

"To save them from the Kafirs."

"I hear of nothing here but one atrocity following another. I must, even at the risk of my being discovered, reach O'Hara's outposts, and tell them of the work the devil is contriving here."

"I know but of one way," said Rabd, "and that is, disguised as a dervish; no Arab will molest you; and I believe you can act the character to the life."

"It is but to act like one in a frenzy, and to quote the Koran incessantly; quick, quick—get me a dress and let me be gone."

"But to procure the dress is not quite so easy," said Rabd, rubbing his head and taking a large horn of wine to brighten his faculties; "I have it! I know what to do," he added, after a minute's thought, and left me.

He dispatched a little black mute to the bezestien at the street corner, just as the keeper was about to close it, and there for a small sum she selected a complete dress; the long party-coloured garment, with a lambskin to cover the head and flap over the shoulders, large

leathern sandals and calfskin girdle, at which hung a string of wooden beads, and a bowl or calabash, in which to receive alms. I soon arrayed myself, and a hatchet was put into my hands. After my face had been well daubed with red paint and khena, and my hair, eyebrows, beard, and mustachios all dyed with indigo, I was quite satisfied with my personal appearance, and confidently believe that the good mother who bore me would not have recognised her youngest and most petted son, as with a beating heart, he took his way from the secret door of the vizier's house, straight towards the gate which faced the position of O'Hara.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE COLONEL'S TENT.

NIGHT was now closing in; the voices of the last muezzins had floated away from the minarets; the stars were coming brightly out of the deep blue sky; the hills were growing black, and a thousand lights and coloured lanterns were twinkling among the mosques and gardens, or in the painted windows and rose-covered kiosks of Sana. All men made way for me with the most profound respect as I hastened towards the gate, where a crowd of half-naked Arab soldiers, with their pikes and muskets placed against the wall, sat cross-legged under a verandah, chewing opium, and playing at chess.

Before I reached the barrier, as the father of all mischief directed, I met a *real* dervish (a "true Simon Pure, and not an impostor," mounted on a *white* ass, which in the East is esteemed as a precious animal. Riding straight up to me, he halted, and after surveying me from head to foot, said—

"Peace be with thee."

"Unto thee be peace, O brother!" I responded, grasping my hatchet more firmly on recognising the frantic Santon Nouredin, who, not very much to my delight, transferred the pipestick from his mouth to mine, in token of friendship; but after a whiff or two, I hastily restored it.

"I perceive you are the Santon Nouredin," said I, "so famous for knowing the three thousand proverbs of Daood?"

"I am he—but what art thou?" he asked.

"A dervish, as you may see," I replied, somewhat uneasily, for the Arab guard were close by; "we are brothers, who live under the same shade."

"That I might see with the eyes of a mole; but thou seemest to be on a journey?"

"I am a haji."

"And whence camest thou, O Haji?"

"From the Land of the Pilgrimage," I answered, making an attempt to pass.

"So thou hast been at the mother of cities?" he continued, placing his white ass somewhat spitefully, I thought, straight before me, and barring the way.

"I have rubbed my forehead on the threshold of the Kaaba; I have drunk of the Zemzem well—flung stones at the devil—and I am here."

"But thy keffie—thy jar of water, and bag of pebbles, where are they?" he asked, suspiciously; for these priests are ever jealous of each other.

"They were stolen from me by thieves of Roba-el-Khali."

"These were strange things for the unsainted sons of the desert to prize!" said he, acutely; "a jar of water and bag of stones?"

"But they took also a pot of the famous ointment of Kerman, that precious gum, the smallest drop of which will heal, in an instant, a gash or wound, were it the length of a man's whole body—yea, from his head to his foot; but, farewell—I go towards the mountain of Abb."

"Beware of the Kafirs," he said, dilating his eyes.

"I am but a poor dervish," I replied, "and my fate is bound unto my neck."

"Stir up the Faithful to war, O Prophet!" said he, quoting the Koran, and brandishing his mace. "Say, if twenty of you persevere, you shall overcome two hundred; and that if there be one hundred, they shall overcome a thousand of those who believe not. It hath not been granted unto any Prophet that he should possess captives until he hath made a great slaughter of the infidels of the earth. Ye seek—"

How far the Santon Nouredden would have gone on quoting from the Koran I know not; but happily for me, at that moment, a 24-pound shot, fired by some unbelieving gunner of her Majesty's Artillery, struck the gallery of a minaret, and heavily a mass of it fell into the street, from whence a vengeful shout was raised by the passengers.

"Bismillah, and let us begone," said I; "for another of these bitter almonds may bring our fate with it; farewell, and peace be with you."

"May your favour never be less, O Haji."

He gave his white ass a thwack with his mace, and we separated. The guard at the gate were disposed to question me; but elated by having so completely baffled the terrible Santon Noureddin, I gave myself all the airs of a real and frantic dervish, and on being accosted by the turbaned subaltern, brandished my axe over his head, whirled myself thrice round, and shouted "Allah ho Ackbar!" with such piety and vociferation, that he, too, was completely deceived; the gate was opened, and closed behind me, and I found myself beyond the city of Sana, with the red fires of the British bivouack glowing in a line, about a mile off, and along the dark hill side before me.

I gave a last look at the square outline of the palace and seraglio of the imaum, gleaming white in the starry evening on their steep

rock above the city, with many a casement and many a gilded pinnacle glittering in the rising moon, whose silver glow, though her disc was yet unseen, spread over the south-west quarter of the sky.

"Oh, Cecil!" thought I, "the hour is coming that must free you, or I shall roll the head of many a Yemencee along the gutters of this infernal city—ay, Solyman's itself, perhaps!"

I drew my sheepskin head-dress closer round my face; I grasped my axe, and, passing through the valley where the prowling jackals were beginning to tear and feast upon the dead Abdali whose bodies were lying, yet unburied, there, I ascended the slope towards the encampment of the British.

As I advanced through the little coffee-trees and other shrubs that waved on the side of the hill, and reached the open ground, I perceived again the line of night-fires, brightly wavering and glowing, before me, with the dusky groups of soldiers standing or sitting round them, or moving to and fro between me and the light. All were in their grey great-coats, with their white belts outside; and the arms, with bayonets fixed, were piled between the tents and hastily constructed huts of palm branches and jowlies; for the careful and judicious O'Hara left no means untried to screen his men from the baleful dews which always fall by night in a tropical climate.

I had not progressed a hundred yards up the hill, when I heard the clear sharp voice of a British soldier, one of the advanced sentinels, give the usual challenge:—

"Who goes there?"

Though, of course, expecting this, I was so delighted to hear the once familiar voice of a Briton, that, with a heart dancing lightly, I pressed up the hill; nor was it until the challenge had been repeated, and I heard the rattle of his musket as he *ported arms*, that I replied,

"A friend."

On coming close up I perceived, in the starlight, two sentinels in their grey overcoats, one of whom had his musket at the charge; and both stood silent, and apparently confounded, when comparing my English answer with the singularity of my appearance.

On another occasion I might have been disposed to amuse myself a little with their surprise, but then I had neither time nor inclination for it.

"What is your number—men?" I asked, authoritatively.

"Seventeenth Regiment," they answered, together; but still keeping their eyes fixed on me, and their bayonets levelled; "but who—or what are you?"

"I am Mr. Hilton, of *the Queen's Own*," said I; "I have been a prisoner among these devilish Arabs—you have heard of me, of course?"

"Oh yes, sir," answered one, readily.

"Glad to see you among us again, sir," added the other, as both shouldered their muskets in salute.

"Colonel O'Hara, of ours, commands, does he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then where is his tent?"

"Third on the right of that fire which is straight before you, sir—the colours of your regiment are there; you will know the tent by the sentry before it."

"Thank you—keep a sharp look-out, my lads," said I, and hurried forward, and in a few minutes I found myself in the heart of the camp or bivouack, for it partook of both characters. I need not relate how often I was stopped, and surlily questioned as to my business there, or how almost every man who saw me started at my aspect, which, to say the least of it, was very remarkable as I passed the watch-fires; neither need I expatiate on the happiness I felt in being among the red coats again, and seeing the British Colours, with their Scottish and English crosses interlaced, and all the insignia of the troops—the blue facings and antelope of the old 6th; the white facings and tiger of the 17th; and, more familiar than all, the scarlet and frogged lace of "the Queen's Own," among whom, the features of every sergeant and soldier were so familiar to me; or how I heard a flute among the tents, and remembered kind-hearted Popkins; neither need I rehearse how the honest fellows stared; and how an inquiring crowd (somewhat clamorous, too, for a camp) accompanied me to the door of O'Hara's tent, which was a large Indian marquee, and into which I stepped with as much freedom as if it was my own.

Some supposed me to be an Arab deserter, and some a spy or assassin; for the der-vishes, to avoid contamination, never ventured among the Kafirs of Aden; thus my immense sheepskin hood with its legs and tail floating over my shoulders, my flowing garments, my face daubed with red paint, and my hair and beared black as indigo could make them, my chaplet of enormous wooden beads, my capacious calabash, and threatening hatchet, were all a source of considerable speculation; and I shall never forget the blank expression of astonishment, mingled with something of fun, which spread over the brown visages of old O'Hara, the well-whiskered O'Flannigan, the good and gentlemanly Montague, Bently, our smart adjutant, and others, when they beheld me. They were all lounging on the ground rolled in their cloaks, smoking cigars and sipping claret from cups, mugs, and glasses of various kinds. But what were my own emotions when, by the light of the lamp which hung from the tent pole, I perceived among them my friend—Fred Langley!

CHAPTER XC.

WELCOME!

I CAME to surprise them, but in my turn was confounded and surprised!

There he sat—Frederick Powerscourt Langley—of whose separation from me I had no very distinct recollection; but whom I believed to have been unchained from me, when dead; and who I had been told was flung over the wall of the Arab castle, and devoured by the jackals—looking just as I had been wont to see him of old, well shaven—not a vestige of beard; his dark mustaches and fine brown hair, trimmed, curled, and shining with Macassar; his smart shell jacket, half hidden under his blue cloak; his sword, with its gold knot, beside him; a cigar in his mouth and a glass of ruby coloured claret in his hand. He was laughing, too, for O'Flannigan had just been uttering some of his broad Irish jokes, as I entered with a cavalcade at my heels, and stood silent, without power to utter a word, for my tongue was tied, and my eyes riveted with astonishment on this resuscitated man.

"Now, what does all this hubbub mean?" demanded the colonel, angrily; "and who the devil are you?"

Unable to reply, I still stood silent,

"Edmonds—sergeant of the guard," cried the colonel; "place a file of men on each side of this queer fellow, and stab him if he makes the least attempt to commit violence."

"The poor man is only an old dervish," said Montague.

"Come to convert us from our haythenish ways," said O'Flannigan, "and to tache us the sin of wine drinking, and having but one wife at a time."

"These dervishes have concealed weapons, and are generally mad, too," said Bently, who like a proper adjutant, took the colonel's view, and felt suspicious.

"Well, fellow—what do you wish?" asked O'Hara, bending his keen grey Irish eyes upon me; "have you not found your tongue yet? Langley, you know something of their language, (bad luck to it!) ask him if he has heard anything about Hilton."

Fred made a shift to ask me in Arabic if I could afford them some information concerning the young officer whom the vizier, Rabad-al-Hoosi, had conveyed towards Sana. I held up my weapon, saying,

"Ask this axe."

"You killed him!" shouted Fred, as, with a hearty curse, he grasped his sword, while a storm of voices rose in the tent, and a number of hands grasped me very unceremoniously. The noise soon subsided, and all gazed upon me, with eyes the reverse of friendly, while various comments, such as honest friendship and kind regret dictated, were made on my untimely demise.

"Poor Frank Hilton," said one, "he was a right good fellow!"

"The step goes in the regiment, of course," said a second.

"And Popkins gets his lieutenantcy," added a third.

"But he must blow on his flute a little longer," said I, in English, on thinking that this scene had lasted quite long enough, for the recollection of Cecil always crushed every thought of mirth in my breast. I threw off my uncouth wig, and displayed my whole face, but the dyes which changed and disfigured every feature of it, as well as my shock head of hair and voluminous beard, so completely disguised me, that it was not until after a long stare of blank astonishment, and also after the colonel had passed the lamp three or four times across the bridge of my nose, that they recognised me; and how shall I describe the shouts of laughter and satisfaction—the hearty congratulations, the inquiries and questions which then followed each other pell-mell, and to most of which I had to accord the same reply; meanwhile I was overwhelmed by curiosity and longing to question Fred Langley, and to learn all those things which he afterwards related to me, but with which I have acquainted the reader elsewhere, to keep, as it were, "the strands" of my story together.

After the commotion had somewhat subsided, the tent was cleared of our soldiers, and O'Hara produced a long saved bottle of poteen, the last of a cask which he had brought out with him in the Candahar, Montague found a bottle of brandy, another fished up a bottle of sherry somewhere, and all drank to my health and welcome back. Old familiar faces and friendly eyes were round me now; old mess-room jokes were referred to over and over again, with many an explosion of reckless laughter at the oddity of my appearance.

"So you have actually come back at last, Hilton!" said O'Flannigan, as he sat with his back to the tent-pole, the colonel's bottle of poteen between his outstretched legs, and with my sheepskin wig on his head, half hiding his thick black whiskers and eyes, which were of that wild and roughish kind we often find in Connaught men; "After all that Langley told us, who could have thought it! For a month past O'Hara has been growling like a bear with a bad cowl, about the time you were staying away."

"You would all have 'growled' more," said I, "had you been in poor Fred's place, when he was chained to me in the Arab fort."

"My dear fellow," said the colonel, shaking my hand, "that is only Pat's way of expressing himself. If I 'growled,' as he elegantly terms it, 'twas at those infernal Arabs, and not at you; but I must say, that you and Langley have made a couple of devilish queer ambassadors! I sent you to form an alliance with the Sultan of Yemen, and to cultivate his friendship; and the first news we heard by the carriers through the Turkish wall was, that Langley had bought one of his ladies; that you had bolted with another, and set the poor man's house on fire: that all Yemen was turned outside in, and that

so many sultans and sheikhs as there are strings in a harp, were to march against us!"

"By my soul!" said O'Flannigan, "when I think of all you have gone through, it seems evident that neither you nor Fred will ever get a long neck by lacking a long head."

"Don't be too sure," said I, with a sad smile; "I have yet much to do when I go back to Sana."

"Back—back to Sana?" exclaimed twenty voices.

"What the blazes would you be after in Sana," asked O'Hara, "unless at the head of your company?"

"You forget all that I told you, gentlemen," said Fred, kindly anxious to relieve me of an explanation; "Miss Marchmont, you remember, is still a prisoner in the hands of the enemy; (you knew her father in India, colonel?) her safety, perhaps, hangs by a hair, for the tenure of human life is often very slight among these Mussulmans; and Hilton has her life and liberty to secure. You will readily conceive, gentlemen, that she claims his service, even before that of the country."

"A thousand thanks, dear Fred," said I to Langley; "you have said for me all I meant to say."

"And he says it well, too, Hilton," added honest old O'Hara, filling my glass; "and believe me, my boy, if one hair of her pretty head is injured, I won't lave a man alive in Sana, but make a clane murder of every mother's son in it, from his grandeur, the sultan, down to the lowest scavenger, and that's all about it; but if it's bent on going back you are, you may as well tell him that old Pat O'Hara, of 'the Queen's Own,' has sworn it! I knew Colonel Marchmont well; I was only an ensign then, in the 86th, the Royal County Down boys, and under his orders I carried their colours, with the darling old harp and crown, under some of the heaviest showers of cold pewter that ever were fired on Indian ground. He was a fine specimen of the old Scottish officer, a little bit over strict and stately for Irishmen, may be—for his notions went back to the days of the Kevenhüller hats, when breeches were daubed with pipeclay, and extra guards were given when the queues were not plumb with the seam of the coat. Well—well—he is in his grave now, in his own country, where he always wished to lie; but here's to your memory, old Jack Marchmont, and be assured that nayther chick nor child of yours shall come to harm while Pat O'Hara, with nine hundred of 'the Queen's Own,' are within musket-shot of them. And so, Hilton, you have just dropped in to pay us an evening visit, and in fancy costume—to lave your card and go back again to that rapparee, your friend and countryman, the grand vizier!"

"I came to put you all on the alert, as it is proposed to assassinate our sentinels, and make a general assault on the camp by all the troops in Sana—about twelve thousand men, I think—and these fully expect to achieve a most signal——"

"Victory?"

"No ; slaughter and extermination. Moreover, it is in contemplation to make a pyramid of all your heads in the maidaun, or before the gates of the seraglio."

"By way of amusing the ladies, I suppose," said O'Flannigan ; "whose head is the handsomest ?—it would likely be put on the top."

"D——d rascals," muttered a number of officers, who had gradually crowded into the marquee, and now I recognised honest Buff, my servant ; and warmly shook him by one hand, while he raised the other for the double purpose of saluting me, and wiping away a tear of pleasure at my return.

"Hoots, gentlemen, they dinna ken better," said the quartermaster (who was a countryman of mine) ; "thae Oriental folk are a' alike. Are we no told in the history of Jehu, that the heads of the king's sons were laid *in two heaps at the entering of the gate until morning ?*"

"So they propose to pile up our sconces like cannon balls in Woolwich Arsenal," said the colonel ; "they are mighty kind in their intentions, and tasteful in their notions, too ; but we will be even with them, may be, before long."

"I hope the imperial property is insured against fire," said O'Flannigan.

"Its strength will be tried when Dreghorn's guns are all in position."

"I would recommend him," said I, "to build a new battery opposite the southern gate."

"There is little danger of his building an *ould* one," said O'Flannigan ; "but when does this intended massacre of so many fine young men take place ?"

"On the first night appointed by a certain old rogue in whom the sultan puts the greatest trust—Yacoob, a diviner. He is to discover by his astrolabe when the conjunction of the planets will favour such a design."

"Already our sentinels are doubled," said O'Hara ; "all we can do further is to have patrols along the valley and between us and the town for a night or so, as I expect within twelve hours to be ready to cannonade the walls, which seem old, rotten, and rickety, so they will fall like a bog hut the moment a shot strikes them. If I could be informed of the time of this intended sortie, I would anticipate it by a night attack ; but what are your own movements to be ?"

"With your leave, Colonel, I must return to Sana for fresh intelligence. Ere long I hope to rejoin you, and lead my company to the assault of this detested place. And now it is time I was retiring. My watch was borrowed by an Arabian acquaintance—can any one say what is the hour ?"

"Past midnight," said De Lancy, with his old lisp ; "about two o'clock in the morning."

"Barney Bralligan's time," added the colonel ; "return or stay—

do as you please in this matter, Hilton; but only be certain you consult your own safety."

"Colonel," said I, in a whisper, as I rose, "I am rather consulting the safety of a poor girl who has now no friend on earth but me; and believe me, I can never think of my own life, except when considering how its safety may be necessary for hers."

"Spoken like a man, Frank!" said the hearty old Irishman; "here's to her health and liberty, in pure poteen, (to think of drinking *it here* of all places in the world!) and I hope to dance at her wedding yet."

I resumed my sheepskin, beads, calabash, and hatchet, and after shaking all warmly by the hand, bade them adieu at the extremity of our lines, and with the kindest wishes for my success and safety, and the reiterated advice to be cautious and wary, I took my dark and lonely way through the stony valley, where the jackals were still howling in such a manner that I am assured had Father Noah heard them, he would never have put a pair of them into the ark; and so, while casting many a lingering look back to the red line of watch-fires that dotted the brow of the black mountain, I reached the eastern gate of Sana.

When he bade me farewell, Fred, who had not spoken much while in the colonel's tent, briefly acquainted me with his discovery of Amina in the grot of Nouredin, and added that she was safe in the heart of the camp, in a pretty little tent of her own, with a soldier's wife to attend her.

These marvels (*i. e.*, her safety and his resurrection, for such it seemed to me) occupied my mind until I reached the private door of Rabd-al-Hoosi's mansion; for the furious manner in which I demanded entrance and required alms in my calabash made the guardians of the city gate admit, and pass me without scruple or delay.

CHAPTER XCI.

AL-HOOSI RESIGNS HIS TURBAN.

I KNEW where to find the vizier, and went straight to his private apartment. There I found him, notwithstanding the untimely hour, waiting for me in great anxiety. A bottle of that forbidden beverage, the strong water of the Kafirs, lay on the edge of the thick felt carpet, on which he half reclined while smoking his hookah. Various boxes of valuables, jewels, and purses of gold and silver coin, with splendidly mounted weapons, especially daggers and pistols, were lying in a glittering pile before him, together with a heap of the richest stuffs the bazaars of India or Arabia could produce. I could not divine what he was about, but his perturbation was evident; moreover he was in his shirt sleeves, and appeared only in his blue velvet vest

and flesh-coloured silk drawers, with all the air of a man who has been working hard, and he carefully secured the door the moment I entered.

"Welcome," said he, in a low voice; "I am rejoiced to see you safe back again—a terrible crisis is at hand for us both!"

"It would seem so," said I, languidly, as I threw myself on a pile of embroidered cushions, with a sigh; "but what does all this confusion mean, and this apparent preparation too?"

"That I am about to abandon Sana and the sultan for ever. Under his tyranny my life has become a burden to me, and I am now so rich by presents and levies (ill-natured persons might call them fines and extortions), that my destruction will be inevitable, even if I do lead the sultan's troops against your trenches to-morrow night, which I am fully expected to do; thus I must leave Sana *before day dawns*, while all is quiet and still, and take my way by Moffak to Hodeida, and there embark for Suez. I will take with me three dromedaries, laden with all my goods of value, made up like bales of coffee, and disguised like an Indian Banian, for its merchant traders are generally such; by making one offering to the tomb of the Santon Sadik, and another to the dola, or governor, I shall easily reach the port and embark in a coaster, or one of the Oriental Company's steamers on the Red Sea."

"But you will be alone," said I, "and to travel so far——"

"It is only three days' journey from this; your troops lie between it and the Moffak road, thus barring all pursuit after me. I am bold and determined, and with my sword and pistol can protect the gudes and gear that God has given me, or I can perish with them; for I am resolved to destroy everything rather than be plundered by those savage Arabs; but of that there is no danger, for all the country between this and Hodeida is quiet, safe, and pastoral. Such are my plans, and such my resolutions; for I am resolved neither to draw the sword against my own countrymen, nor against my former friends and benefactors here in Sana. Yacoob, the diviner, has declared that at midnight to-morrow the conjunction of the stars will be favourable for the intended assassination of your sentinels, and the subsequent massacre of the camp.

"A slaughter which we will anticipate by making the first assault—well—well—I am choking with impatience!"

"Ah, the worst—for *you*, at least—is yet to come," said Rabd, speaking slowly, "to propitiate the stars of good destiny, to appease the people who have long been murmuring, and more than all, to quiet the stormy jealousy of sultana, the Banou Harem, or chief wife—oh, sir—how shall I tell you ——"

"Speak on, speak on!" said I, bitterly, stamping my foot as he paused.

"An hour before our hordes steal out of Sana,—that is, one hour before midnight, Miss Marchmont (oh, the poor unhappy girl!) is to

die that death which only women of the seraglio die—women who incur the displeasure of the imaum. She is to be flung from the upper terrace of the palace into the chasm of the Shab below.

I felt so paralysed by this dreadful intelligence that Rabd hastened to bring me a large cup of wine—his panacea for everything—and forced me to drink it.

"Come," said he, "be a man, for she may yet be saved."

"Our troops will make an attack on Sana on the first night a breach is practicable. I might storm the seraglio at the point of the bayonet, and save her——"

"You forget that the moment the tide of battle rolls that way—I mean towards the palace walls—Osman Oglou will order his eunuchs to strangle or behead every woman in the place."

I could only clench my hands and grind my teeth at this new intelligence.

"Take one more cup of wine, Mr. Hilton; there is yet another and a better way than storming the seraglio and finding it full of slaughtered women, if it be not burned before your soldiers could reach it. Reassure yourself and listen to me; for the same avenue by which I mean to save myself to-night, may save Miss Marchmont on the morrow. Though every gate of Sana is guarded by horse, foot, and cannon (these none of the best, however, as they will burst on the first discharge), there is one little gate at which there is neither guard nor gun. It opens from the garden of the seraglio at once into the open country, and of that gate Solyman himself, Osman Oglou, and I alone possess the right of entrance—each having a key.

"Ah—thank you, thank you! I now begin to breathe again. Well, and then——"

"Listen with attention," he continued, impressively, "for life and death—ay, the lives and deaths of hundreds—may depend on what I now describe to you. This wicket in the city wall opens immediately under the sheer rock on which the palace stands; on the left a Chinese bridge crosses a chasm through which the Shab winds; from thence the path ascended straight to a terrace which overhangs the cliff. The spring nights are dark and dusky still, even in Arabia here, and a company—ay, or six companies—of soldiers might reach that terrace unseen, and save the poor victim in the death gasp; though three stout fellows would be enough, for on such cruel occasions as this there are never more than Black Osman, and another—or at the utmost four."

"And this gate——"

"I will give you the key of it after we pass through, for another hour must see me on my way to Hodeïda."

"And when does this intended—oh, malediction on every drop of blood in your sultan's body!—when will Cecil be brought out upon the terrace?"

"At eleven o'clock to-morrow night—one hour before midnight

prayer, and one hour before the Abdali issue by the eastern gate to assassinate your advanced sentinels."

"To-morrow night at eleven,—oh, I shall die of impatience."

"No, no," said the matter-of-fact Rabd, as he hastily continued his packing in which I willingly assisted him; "no one ever died of impatience, and why should you? I only hope that the Centre of the Universe and Corner-stone of Wisdom may not expire or burst of rage and spleen, when he ascertains that his favourite vizier has taken French leave and left him in the midst of all his troubles, with an army of red-coated Kafirs at his gates."

Rabd-al-Hoosi took all his measures with admirable prudence. In a kiosk of the garden behind his house he had concealed three strong and active dromedaries, which he loaded with a mass of valuables, the long accumulation of the bribery, corruption, and extortion incident to such a life and position as his had been, and the necessary result of such a despotic government, in a country where there are no means of sinking or investing money, or having it transferred by bills from place to place. Thus in gold, jewels, and valuables of every description, there were more than £50,000 worth made up in packages like merchandise, and corded on the backs of the dromedaries. When these arrangements were completed, Rabd dressed himself in the costume of a Banian merchant; placed two pairs of loaded pistols, a sword and dagger in his sash, and concealed in the folds of his turban and the band of his voluminous trowsers a vast number of diamonds and other jewels of the greatest value; and then, with something like a sigh in his breast, a sadness on his brow, and a bright light in his eye—for his heart was animated by the hope of escape, the fear of surprise, anxiety for his treasure, and joy that he was about to return to his native land—a joy conflicting with the natural sorrow we feel in leaving for ever old familiar scenes, he took the leading dromedary by the bridle—the others followed—and thus, by a narrow gate we passed from his garden into the maidaun. There bidding adieu to his ticklish rank and tyrant power, his magnificent dwelling, his wives, his slaves and household, Rabd-al-Hoosi set out upon his homeward flight and lonely pilgrimage.

"Better fly to-night than have the alternative of being shot by the British picquets or bowstrung to-morrow," said he, as we stole past the cavalry bivouac in the maidaun; "now the time has come with me, as it came to my predecessors, when the rumour of my wealth made the tenure of life a very uncertain one."

Twice my heart forgot to beat, when the horse patrols of the Mufti dashed up to us, and barring the way with their long lances, held lanterns close to our faces, and roughly demanded our object and purpose; but a slip of paper which was signed and sealed by *himself* as vizier, and which Rabd boldly held before them, opened a way for us like magic, and without further molestation we reached the great wall which bounded the gardens of the seraglio, where the same paper made us a passage through a body of horsemen com-

manded by Mahmoud Ali Badr, whose lieutenant respectfully placed the said written pass upon his forehead and eyes as he ushered us into the garden and closed the gates behind, confidently believing that notwithstanding the early and untimely hour, the three dromedaries were laden with necessities for the ladies of the palace.

The gardens were of vast extent; but it was not the number or beauty of those gilded kiosks which terminated every arboured walk I remarked; neither was it the beautiful fountains of brass and marble, that flung their jets of crystal water into the starry sky, nor the beds of flowers so rich in tints and fragrance; neither did the grottoes, terraces, nor bowers of fruit trees win from me a glance or thought; I bent all my power of vision on the steep rock which was crowned by the towers and terrace of the seraglio; upon the little bridge which led to them by crossing the chasm through which the Shab was flowing far down below in darkness, and unseen; and thus every feature of the place, and the facilities they might afford me, were graven deeply on my heart and memory, as we issued through the private door-way, a low and narrow postern, into the open country. A grove of date palms and a mass of wild vines and rose-trees concealed this gate from ordinary observers; but how, or why so dangerous a postern was left unguarded, and at such a time, can only be accounted for by the vizier's desire to leave an open passage for himself, if compelled to bid a "long farewell" to Yemen and "all his greatness."

"Now, Heaven be thanked," said he, with something between a gulp and a sigh, "that Sana and its soldiers are behind us!"

He gave me the key of the gate—that key more precious than a gold mine—and I placed it in my breast.

The moon had long since waned; but the stars were clear and bright; the dawn was three hours distant, but the sky was all a clear cold blue, and a magnificent aerolite was seen to sweep through it, and to drop behind the dark mountain, the brow of which was zoned by the fire of the British camp.

"A happy omen!" said Rabd, while mounting the hump of his most lightly laden dromedary; "it has fallen in the direction of Hodeida, and points to the road I must pursue. I am still Mussulman enough to accept the brilliant augury; but here ends my viziership, and once again I am free, and once more bid you *a lang gude nacht as Rabbie Dalhousie*."

There we parted.

He took the lonely road to Hodeida by the way of Moffak, and I ascended the hill towards the British camp. His swift trotting dromedaries soon disappeared among the orange groves and coffee woods; and after gazing long at the dark outline of the imam's palace, and wondering in what portion of it my hapless Cecil was pillowing her beloved head; and whether she was now awake, asleep, ill, or well, I returned once more towards the out-pickets, passed

our advanced sentinels, and reached the tents, just as the merry drums and fifes of "the Queen's Own" began the lively reveille.

In the ensuing forenoon the wise men of the East who inhabited Sana, found great cause for marvel, for telling their beads and calling on the Prophet and the twelve imaums. First: because of Rabd's disappearance, and secondly because of the brilliant aerolite which had blazed through the whole eastern hemisphere, and fallen beyond the British camp; it had been seen by Yacoob the diviner, and Noureddin the santan, when perched overnight on the summit of the mosque of Solyman; and they had foretold that at daybreak the camp of the infidels would be found all consumed and destroyed, and they quoted to the multitude the fifteenth chapter of the Koran, concerning the fall of those devils against whom "a flame is directed;" for the Arabs believe, when a meteor shoots from its place, that the hand of the Prophet is hurling it on the lands of the unbelieving. But, lo! when morning brightened in the east, the "unsainted" British were still in their camp on the brow of the hill, and with the rising of the sun, ten pieces of infidel cannon vomited their obnoxious contents against the city of the holy imaum, sweeping the thoroughfares, knocking down the tall minarets like nine-pins, breaching solid walls, and smashing domes and terraces like sugar paste.

All Sana was in confusion, and the sultan foamed with rage; the vizier was nowhere to be found, and from various indications it became confirmed beyond a doubt that he had levanted in the night, taking with him every portable article of value, save the dowers of his four wives, which he had very honourably left untouched; but these four sums the imaum in his righteous indignation appropriated to himself; he ordered his house to be pillaged and razed to the ground, even while our cannon shot were whistling through the streets, and then sent all the wives, slaves, and horses of the fugitive to the market, with tickets and collars about their necks, signifying that they were for sale at the lowest prices; but the inhabitants had something else to think of than investing cash in women or cattle that day.

All this I learned after, as well as the ultimate fate of Rabd-al-Hoosi.

On the third day he reached Hodeïda in safety, and after sending valuable presents to the santan who kept the tomb of Sadik, and to the dola, or governor (who is always an immediate dependent of the imaum of Yemen), he reached the port, which though spacious, is only capable of receiving small coasting vessels. There he sold his dromedaries, and embarking all his goods, as coffee, pepper, &c. (after making a handsome present to the Emir Bahr, or collector of customs), sailed for Suez. Now it happened most unfortunately that the dola, who resides in the small castle of Hodeïda, had spread a carpet on the pier, and was sitting thereon with his pipe, when Rabd embarked, and notwithstanding his disguise, he immediately

recognised the vizier, from whom he had, for a consideration, received his appointment but a few years before, and who had since that time been his best friend.

Full of suspicion and ingratitude, the dola dispatched an armed khanja after the coasting brigantine, with orders to "bring back the fugitive coffee merchant, dead or alive, with all his goods." A shot from a shuternaul fired across the forefoot of the brigantine, made the master bring to, and the barge of the dola sheered alongside.

Now this coaster was minus arms of every description; but Rabd-al-Hoosi, rendered desperate by the prospect of recapture on the verge of freedom, flung a bag of gunpowder into the khanja; to this present the skipper, a reckless Lascar, added a shovelful of hot cinders from the cook's galley; thus one half of the Arabs were scorched as black as Nubians, and the other half were nearly blown to rags, while the brigantine filled her foreyard and bore away into the sea of Kolzom before a fair and freshening wind.

Rabd-al-Hoosi, on reaching the bustling port of Alexandria, shaved himself for the first time during twenty years, resumed the dress and habits of Europe, and soon transferred himself, with all his goods and chattels, per steamer, to the land of liberty.

He is now settled down, in his native kingdom, on a small but handsome estate, where one may find some of the best shooting and coursing in the south Lowlands; and there he passes for a most reputable and influential landed proprietor, who has acquired great wealth, by some means unknown, "in the East;" and as I cannot indicate him more particularly than by his assumed name, I may mention that no man bears more weight at meetings of road trustees or commissioners of supply, at boards of the three railways of which he is chairman — no man gives better champagne suppers at the Scottish United Service Club, or makes better speeches at the meetings of the general assembly of the Universal Kirk itself, than my old friend — *Rabd-al-Hoosi*.

CHAPTER XCII.

THE COLUMNS OF ATTACK.

BUT to return. With the first peep of dawn, our mortar began to throw shells into Sana, and, soon after, Dreghorn's field-pieces opened a fire upon the eastern wall. Our artillerymen sent shot after shot with such precision, that, long before mid-day, the gate which opened to the valley, and both its flanking towers, were completely beaten down; an open breach was effected elsewhere; and now our shot bowled along the whole length of the great thoroughfare, reaching even to the maidaun, where the horse-guard, under Mahmoud Ali, and the camel artillery were bivouacked; yet not a shot could

These unfortunate Yemenees give us back in return, so elevated was the position we occupied. Their troop of camel artillery contrived to throw up, from a howitzer, one shell, which fell among our men. All near it threw themselves flat on their faces, but the fusee burnt out without the charge exploding, and they rolled it from man to man for some time, till O'Flannigan bowled it into the valley, where, to the astonishment of all, it burst at last.

The day passed slowly on; our cannon ceased firing when the breaches were effected, or only threw an occasional shot into the town when any attempts were made to repair the walls; but these were very feeble, as the Arabs are such indifferent mechanics; and moreover, believed that as the rampart was beaten down, fate had ordained it to remain so, and repairs were useless.

As evening approached, bodies of their horsemen drew near these gaps, as if to defend the entrance; but as I had acquainted O'Hara with the secret alley to the garden of the seraglio, it was resolved, that while two columns of our force should make an entry by the fallen gate and breach, another should gain possession of the palace, and from thence open a fire upon the town—a measure well-calculated to create consternation, and effect the total rout of the sultan's ill-trained and irregular levies. The signal agreed upon, for the attack by the breaches, was to be *a rocket*, thrown up from the terrace of the seraglio when we reached it.

On assuming command of my company (Maule, the captain, had gone on sick leave to Britain) it cost me considerable pains to cleanse myself of the dyes with which the ex-vizier had so liberally bedaubed me over-night; and as I was without even a rag by way of wardrobe, the portmanteaux and travelling bags of "the Queen's Own" were ransacked to furnish me with habiliments; from Montague I received a red coat; from De Lancy a sash; from O'Flannigan a sword and belt; from Bently a shacko; from O'Hara something else; and so on; for it was impossible to lead number three Company in my dervish's sheepskin, keffie, and calabash, which, from that auspicious moment, I solemnly bequeathed to the devil. Buff fell heir to them, and long after the sun had set I heard shouts of laughter in the tents, as he paraded among our thoughtless fellows in my relinquished attire.

I shall not attempt to depict all I endured while the day passed slowly, or all I thought and hoped, or dreaded. To quote a talented living writer: "those who have known what it is to be upon the eve of a hazardous enterprise; to count the slowly passing hours as *the moment of action draws nigh*; to watch every movement and look of those whose most trivial word or act may change your whole destiny; to experience the terrible responsibility of fixing on measures or on movements, on which more than life depends, when the judgment may be warped by impatience or obscured by anxiety; those who have been so tried, and those alone, can comprehend" what I endured on the day before the attack on Sana.

The curse of a lively imagination weighed heavily on me, for it drew up a thousand pictures of woe and sadness. Cecil might be dying, or dead; she might be sick—unable to move—or immured where none could find her, where she might be left to perish amid the flames of the burning palace. The vizier might have mistaken the hour at which she was to be brought upon the terrace to die; we might find the postern secured; the bridge cut, or the garden full of troops; a hundred contingencies might bar our passage to the seraglio; and thus we might be too late to save her, after all her black and bitter misery!

It was in vain that I strove to control these horrid and torturing thoughts, and sought to join in the thoughtless conversation and merriment of my brother officers, who when the cannonade ceased (for each of them had tried his skill in gunnery at some particular minaret or architectural feature of the city), were lounging on the grass before the tents, smoking cheroots and drinking pale Indian ale, with their jackets unbuttoned and their swords beside them. As I had no possible means of communicating with Cecil, and of urging her to take courage as a rescue was at hand, I could only hope that she might see our camp from the windows of her splendid prison.

How my heart beat as the glowing sun set beyond the purple hills and its last rays faded from the green valley before us; as the yellow gleam died upon mosque and minar, tower and terrace; as the bright stars came out of the blue sky; as darkness stole over the flat-roofed city, and the shadow of the vast square façade of the imaum's palace, and the loftier outline of Mount Nikkun, with its ruined castle, melted into the gloom that deepened to the eastward. Our soldiers had unpiled their arms and were crowding before the encampment, in which all lights and fire were extinguished.

The last echoes of the shrill muezzin's cry had floated away in varying cadence on the wind; and never did mortal sound vibrate more keenly through a human breast than the voice of Bently, our adjutant, did through mine, when, about half-past eight, he drew his sword, and cried,

"Queen's Own—fall in by companies;" and thereafter proceeded to form the parade, for we used neither drum nor bugle, to avoid alarming the foe in the city beneath us.

The battalion was soon formed under the starlight; the men were all in light marching order, with their great coats folded, for the knapsacks, havresacks, blankets, canteens, and tents were left, with the heavier field pieces, in charge of a strong party in the intrenchment, as we never had a doubt of being able to drive out the sultan's troops and possess ourselves of the whole city; and when I looked along the dark line of our regiment—so quiet, so still, so regular and firm, the result of long and gradual discipline—when I compared their efficiency and steady courage with the noisy, galloping and scampering Arab horsemen whom we were to encounter, I felt

certain that, brave as these Orientals undoubtedly are, we should drive them all like smoke before us.

O'Hara, the two majors, and Bently, the adjutant, mounted their horses; the officers assumed their places in the ranks; the line was formed in the most perfect order as if upon a home parade, with the colours between the 4th and 5th companies; and the pioneers, with their axes and shovels, saws and billhooks, two deep in rear of the centre; Dr. Splint and his two assistant-surgeons had all their instruments ready, and Mac Vitie, the quarter-master, with the bandsmen, and supernumeraries of various kinds were prepared with blankets, lint, and bandages, to assist the wounded. On our right the wings of the 6th and 17th Regiments were formed in the same order.

The pouches were opened and the ammunition examined; the verbal reports collected by the adjutants, and the colours were uncased. I was again at the head of my company, every man of which I knew as well as if he was my own brother; I was again in uniform, with a sword in my hand! Every man in the regiment knew the great stake which I had in the desperate game about to be played, for, in every tent, they had been duly informed by Buff how "the master's sweetheart, a darling of an heiress—and a general's daughter to boot—was kept prisoner by the big blackguard of a sultan, who wanted to marry her, but she would rather have a poor lieutenant of 'the Queen's Own,' than the king of all the Hindies." This was exactly the kind of thing to gain their sympathy; so poor Cecil's name (had they known it) would assuredly have been, that night, the *cri-de-guerre* of every brave fellow in the regiment. My heart was burning! the routine of forming the parade, though dispatched with service-like rapidity, appeared to me most intolerably slow; but at last we received from O'Hara the welcome order—

"With ball cartridge—load!"

And I heard with joy the whirling of the steel ramrods as they were rammed home on the cartridges, and then the clicking of locks as the percussion muskets were capped.

"Fix bayonets!" rapidly followed; "shoulder arms—by sections of threes, right shoulders forward—quick march!"

These orders were obeyed with alacrity, and the whole force, consisting of about eighteen companies of British infantry, and ten of the 10th regiment of Sepoys, with four pieces of light artillery, began to descend the hill, leaving four companies, the rest of the artillery, and the Indian Gholandazecs, under our senior major, to defend the camp, on which we were to retire in case of a reverse or repulse.

Major Dreghorn commanded the column which advanced towards the fallen gate, over which he had no doubt of being able to drag two of the field pieces; O'Hara led the other column, in which was Langley's company, towards the open breach; one of our majors

with O'Flannigan, commanded the third and smallest party, which consisted of only three companies of "the Queen's" with four pioneers. I acted as guide, and Buff marched beside me, carrying a rocket, the long stick of which he had stuck into the barrel of his musket.

This rocket, which we were to throw up from the battlement of the palace (*when we reached it*), was to be the signal for the columns of Dreghorn and O'Hara entering, and for a simultaneous attack upon the town from three points.

We marched silently down towards the deep and wooded gorge, which led directly to the postern-gate of the palace-garden. In one hand I had my sword, in the other I clutched the key, as if the safety of the world depended upon it. The light-hearted O'Flannigan marched on by my side; and as he had no share in my deep anxiety, he continued to rattle and talk away as if we had our legs under the well-polished table of the mess-room.

I answered very briefly and impatiently; for at such a time, at such a crisis, and when such terrible events were all to pass within an hour, could I attend to such information as he pressed upon me? The last gossip from Chatham, such as that Blanche Palmer had eloped from Howard of the Buffs, and gone off, bag and baggage, with one of the Innis-killings; that Lumley, of the Fusileers, had sold out, or gone to a colonial corps, from whence he would, of course, go to the devil; that some one else was enjoying himself recruiting for the 2nd West at Sierra Leone; that Flying Dutchman had won the Derby; and that De Lancy's brother had been placed upon General Growler's staff, in the Kilkenny district, as an extra aide—but as the young ladies of the general's family didn't like his polka, and he tore their muslins with his spurs in the *deux-temps*, he had been despatched to join his regiment in the Mauritius, and so forth.

Finding that to all these various pieces of important intelligence he scarcely obtained an answer, O'Flannigan threw away the end of his cigar, and began to sing,—

"Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules—"

"For Heaven's sake, O'Flannigan, do not sing," said I, imploringly.

"How can you be so rash, Pat?" said the major.

"What the devil do ye mane?" he asked, pulling out his great whiskers; "don't you know that I come of a singing family? Is it not on record by Hansard, that when there was nothing being done in the House of Commons one mighty dull morning about two o'clock, my uncle, Mr. Michael Flagherty, begged the speaker to favour the company with a song; and like a sensible man the speaker did so, from the chair—and ye may guess, for I can never tell you, how the House laughed till its chimney-pots fell off!"

"Hush, Pat—hush, we are close on the gate," said I, as we

descended into the deep and dark ravine, overhung by vast masses of tangled foliage, under which the Shab was murmuring on its way towards Mouab.

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE TERRACE OF THE SERAGLIO.

WE passed through the rocky hollow where the lemon, the quince, and fig were all mingling their branches with the wild sugar-cane, and a hundred luxuriant creepers that were matted round their stems or twisted from branch to branch; and we soon reached the gate, a carved Moorish arch, which was deeply sunk in the strong old wall, and screened by a mass of foliage.

I opened the door at once by one turn of the key, and then we found ourselves in the beautiful gardens of the palace, where the gilded kiosks and china vases were glittering in the star-light, at the end of every avenue of myrtle and cypress, and of every flowery walk, where the bayonets of our sloped muskets made great havoc among the arbour'd vines and rose-trees.

Sword in hand, and with a heart glowing in the hope of the coming rescue, and of settling my long debt of vengeance and hostility with the Yemenees, I led the way, and in silence we reached the bridge which crossed the chasm of the Shab, below the terrace-brow that rose one hundred and fifty feet above it; but how high we were then above the bed of the river I knew not, for it flowed through the profundity of a dark abyss, perhaps as deep again below.

The bridge bent and swung in a very alarming manner as we marched across, for it was narrow and slender enough to have passed for the fabled Al Sirat, with this difference, that the latter spanned a sea of fire, while the one we traversed crossed a chasm so deep, so dark, so terrible, that the soul shrank while the eye attempted to pierce it; and that hideous rent in the basalt was the grave of those unfortunate women who were condemned to die at the caprice of the sultan, or to gratify the spite of the Banou Harem.

The three companies crossed in safety, and advanced up the narrow zig-zag path, until a gate of high and strong palisadoes barred our way. In vain we thrust against it, and the united strength of six men failed, for it stood firm as the volcanic rocks in which it was fixed! Rabd had not mentioned this to me—had he forgotten it, or merely lured us to destruction?

There were drops of perspiration on my brow, and there was agony in my heart, at this unforeseen and formidable hindrance. To cut or break it down might cause premature alarm; O'Hara and Dreghorn were waiting the signal to attack before they should be attacked by sortie; and more than all to me, it wanted but half an hour of that awful time when Cecil was to be brought forth upon the terrace above us!

The pioneers unstrapped their saws, poured oil upon their blades to soften the sound of cutting, and each, after selecting a palisade about six inches square, proceeded with the utmost deliberation to saw them through.

The suspense and anxiety caused by this delay were the most bitter I had yet endured!

I trembled at every real or fancied sound in the palace above us, and every breath of wind seemed to be laden with moans and supplications from the terrace that overhung the gate.

At last—oh, joy!—the palisades gave way; a breach sufficient to admit the ingress of two files abreast was made, and again we began to thread our way up the steep and winding path.

As we ascended, the moon, now on the wane, became visible above the hills, and its brilliant light streamed softly down on Sana, which lay like a map below us, with all its white mansions, its domed mosques and slender minarets. The mild, warm wind, that swept through the city and valley, was laden with the fragrance of many a grove and garden; and the tinkle of a lute, the note of a tamboura, and the rattle of the tumtum, or little Arab drum, rose at times from a lighted kiosk, where some luxurious emir, or voluptuous sheikh, heedless of the approaching conflict, still loitered among the beauties of his *anderun*, or to watch the winning motions of the *alma* dancers.

Anon, there came other sounds on that soft, midnight wind. In the direction of the maidaun, there rose a murmur, and occasionally a sharp cry—the *teebir*—that floated over the flat roofs of the city and ascended upward to the terrace.

This was the hum of gathering men; the Arabs of Solyman were assembling for their midnight slaughter and assault, little dreaming that, with bayonets fixed and cannon loaded with canister and grape, the hated Faringis were already at their gates—yea, within their palace walls; and thus, in the heart of their capital!

Halting our party at the summit of the pathway, where the first files were hidden by a luxuriant hedge of rose-trees, O'Flannigan and I, attended only by Buff, ascended to the terrace, which was all deserted, and not a symptom of life was there, save a ray of light, which shone from one of the many circular windows that overlooked it. Except the murmur of the city below, chafing like the surge of a distant sea, there was no sound on this spacious terrace, and O'Flannigan, who respected the agony I seemed to feel, asked me now what we should do.

"Your watch—your watch—what is the hour, O'Flannigan?" said I.

"*Eleven*, to a minute," said he.

"One hour from their midnight prayer—the time mentioned to me by the vizier."

"If they have anticipated it!"

"Oh, do not surmise anything so horrible!"

"Hush, gentlemen, if you please," said Buff, handling the lock of his musket, "there is something stirring now."

"By the powers, it's a couple of darkies!" said the captain of Grenadiers.

"Back, O'Flannigan—back, a little," said I, "let us conceal ourselves."

A door opened in the high, dark building behind us, and two armed negroes came forth, leading a woman between them. Six paces brought them into the full light of the moon, which gushed like a silver stream aslant from the jagged cornice of the seraglio; and oh, how can I write it with calmness?—even at this quiet time, when I remember the excitement and agony of that moment, and when I saw Cecil in the grasp of Osman Oglou and another eunuch, who led her forward to the giddy verge of that beetling precipice which overhung the city of Sana, the stony valley and the Shab rolling darkly at an unknown depth below.

We looked on this sad group for a moment; but it sufficed to show me Cecil, as wan, wasted, and ghastly (for her veil had been torn from her face) as long nights of raving and days of misery could make her; and she made no resistance, save by a single sob half-stifled in her throat, as if she was wearied of weeping, wearied of misery, and of life. It was evident that her heart had been so long a prey to sad and despairing impressions, that nothing now could move or excite her. She was otherwise quite calm, and with closed eyes submitted to her fate. Poor, poor Cecil! That moment sufficed to show the black visage of Osman Oglou, with his shattered jaw encircled by a linen band, and his hideous, bloodshot, and watery eyes, which glistened in the moonlight like those of a cobra copella; it sufficed also to show us his companion, a yellow-orbed negro, with a nose as flat as his cheek, and a mouth like a brass howitzer.

In one moment we saw all this, and in the next, with a shout, we rushed upon them!

Before he could utter a threat or an outcry, by one downright blow I clove Black Osman's head in two like a ripe water melon, while the powerful O'Flannigan grasped his comrade by the throat, and gave an Irish "Huloo!" as he sent him whizzing like a crow into the dark abyss beneath us.

Cecil was free!—she was saved, and in my arms, and I gazed upon her with speechless tenderness, with ardour and with anguish, for the bright joy of my heart was chilled when I beheld the frightful pallor of her cold, wan cheek, and the glazed expression of her half-closed eyes. So completely had she resigned herself to death, as to be for a time incapable of understanding that she was saved; but the bustle and voices of our soldiers, the flashing of their arms, the British uniform, and their British tongues, as they crowded round us in wonder and commiseration, brought her back, as it were, to the world which she thought had passed away.

Seeing her staring wildly, honest Buff lifted the shako off my head (for both my arms were occupied in supporting her) and said,

"Take a good look at him, ma'am—he is Mr. Hilton, all safe and sound with a whole skin, and there are none here but the lads of *the Queen's Own*."

Cecil said something about "God having spared me to save her a second time, and to see her before she died;" but she spoke in a low and breathless whisper, and almost immediately fainted.

"Let her be carried to the rear," said the major commanding; "we must put her in a safe place, and let Dr. Splint attend her."

"God bless her, poor thing!" said the soldiers.

"Can I help you sir?" "or I?" "or I?" "or I?" said they all, crowding round me. Brave good men they were, though, alas! many have since found their graves in the fatal Hospital of Scutari, the vale of Inkermann, and the frozen trenches of Sebastopol.

"Look out, lads!" cried O'Flannigan, "up with the rocket, for the colonel will think we have forgotten him."

Buff fired the match and threw it into the air.

Like a fiery dragon with ten millions of sparkles at its tail, the rocket shot away from his hand, and arching high in air above the terrace of the seraglio, announced that *we* were in the heart of the place.

A hearty hurrah followed; it rose from two quarters of the city; then came the boom of the cannon and the red flashing of musketry, mingling with the silver moonlight, and streaking with fire the darkness and obscurity that involved the shaded side of Sana.

CHAPTER XCIV.

"ALIJANNAH! ALIJANNAH!"

Now we had but two objects in view, to seize the sultan and drive his troops out of Sana, after which we could make our own terms with the Yemenees.

Of the events more immediately following the sudden and fortunate rescue of Cecil, I have but an indistinct recollection. The necessity for leading my company in the work before us, compelled me to separate myself from her for a time; in charge of one of our assistant surgeons, a sergeant, and three soldiers, I sent her to the camp, the path to which was still open and safe; for there alone I knew she could be properly attended to; and there my heart and thoughts followed her; thus, all my duty was performed that night mechanically. Our first task was to break into the seraglio and fulfil the orders of O'Hara, by saving the poor women from that barbarous and indiscriminate slaughter which was worthy only of the kingdom of Dahomey, and to which their lord and master, the sultan,

had foredoomed them, to prevent "the Kafirs" from making them captives. This task was entrusted to O'Flannigan and De Lancy with their grenadiers, and they "did it," as Pat afterwards said, "in great style, driving out the yoonuchs at the point of the bayonet, and taking the ould sultan himself, as he came out of the bath, in great deshabille."

"How in dishabille?" I asked.

"The devil an atom had he on but his spectacles, and sure that was little enough; so we rowled him up in a warm blanket, bundled him into a dark room, and put a guard over him."

In this duty, the Hon. Mr. Morphew, one of our ensigns, was killed.

"Poor Murphy," said O'Flannigan, as he turned over the body; "you'll never change your name again in this world."

While O'Flannigan and the major remained with two companies to guard the only avenue to the lofty palace rock, I endeavoured with the remainder to rejoin O'Hara, who by this time was waging a severe and unequal conflict in the streets of the town, every garden and avenue of which were filled by barbarous hordes, among whom the steady fire of grape and musketry made a deadly havoc.

The greater number of their forces had been concentrated in the maidaun previous to their projected sortie, and on this place O'Hara and the herculean Major Dreghorn, who were advancing from two points, concentrated all their energies.

Guided by the uproar of the contest, and the wavering gleams of light that came from the musketry, rather than by any knowledge I possessed of that part of Sana, I led my company, then one hundred strong, towards the maidaun. We marched in two subdivisions through the streets, which in that quarter were empty; but as we drew near the great mosque of Solymán, the combatants came in view, and we advanced more slowly, firing upon them as we drew near, and full of natural animosity, kindled by the atrocious tyranny to which Cecil, Langley, and myself had been subjected, I told my men to take sure and deadly aim, that every bullet might rid the world of an Arab.

Pressing on thus, and keeping up a running fire, we reached the green maidaun, at the very time when the heads of the other columns, led by our colonel and Dreghorn, appeared at different avenues and opened a simultaneous and destructive cross-fire upon the Arabs who crowded it, and two bands of whom they had driven in through streets strewn with killed and wounded, encumbering every foot of the way from the breaches in the eastern wall.

At this moment, by some unforeseen accident, flames broke out in the great mosque. Being composed principally of painted wood, it burned with amazing rapidity; the light of the moon was eclipsed; long corkscrew-shaped flames wrapped the slender minarets to the crescents on their summits, and others shot up through the oak ribs of the great dome, until the whole united, and the building blazed

like a vast cone of solid fire. The Arabian sky was clear and pure, and the brightness and the splendour of the light shed by this torrent of roaring flame upon the terraced streets of white caunan, upon the beautiful gardens and the façade of the seraglio; on the peak of Mount Nikkum and on the adjacent hills, was so bright and so vivid, that in the most remote part of Sana one might have read a small book with ease.

I could see every soldier's face distinctly as at noonday, and could read the number of the regiment on their shakos, belt-plates, and buttons.

A sea of turbaned horsemen, with their spears glittering and their tufted feathers waving as they rushed against the night wind, came rolling like a living flood upon us. Their heads were stooped, their bucklers lowered, and lances levelled.

Mingled with a yelling horde of the sultan's half-naked infantry on, on they swept like a hurricane, undeterred by our fire, and we, that is my company, must have been trod to death beneath their hoofs, had not two of our field-pieces suddenly thrown a shower of grape into them from an alley, which drove them back in disorder, and by enfilade saved us from destruction. With the front ranks kneeling, and the rear firing over their heads, we continued to pour our shot into the living mass, in unison with our other two columns, whose fire from two of the greater thoroughfares swept the whole length of the maidaun, directing their bullets by the light of the blazing mosque.

The sultan's camel artillerymen never fired a shot; but again and again the wild horsemen of his allies and his own guards, led by Mahmoud Ali Badr, rushed with bare bosoms on our levelled bayonets; but invariably they were hurled back, though firing vigorously with muskets and pistols, hewing with the sabre and thrusting with the lance, and their large green banner which bore the white double-bladed sword of the Prophet, and the sacred standard of Khassim, both rose and sank repeatedly as their bearers were shot to the earth.

Seven times (their mystic number) they came on, and *seven times* we repelled them, while the din of shrieks and the Arab drum, the yells of the *tecbir*, the clashing of cymbals and rushing to and fro of horsemen as they attacked O'Hara on one flank or Dreghorn on the other, and then dashed against our hedge of steel, mingled with many a shrill cry of sudden death or anticipated vengeance.

We happily lost but few, while our volleying fire, as it rolled from man to man, withered their pride, and piled the wild Moslems across each other in scores; yet on they would come again, and the seventh or last encounter was deadliest of all; with the last efforts of expiring valour and religious despair, they flung themselves like a living surge upon the lines of levelled steel that barred the three avenues of the maidaun, grappling with the bayonets like wild cats, yelling like *hænas*, and twisting in death, like serpents in their

coil. Being on horseback, our field officers were greatly exposed; but although bullets, arrows, and lances whistled about them, not one was touched or had even his horse wounded.

Led by the wild Santon Nouredin, who had relinquished his beads and calabash that he might swing his axe with greater effect, and who had rent his keffie in rage and grief; led also by the aged Sheikh Abdulmelik, with his snow-white beard streaming on the wind; by the gallant Mohamed and his enemy the Sultan of Shugra (who had relinquished their feud for a time), led by the kind old Abu Jahl, Kior Ibn Kogia, and Jaffer the assassin, all clad in mail shirts, caps of steel, and striped Damascus shawls, the Arabs made their seventh and last attack, and bravely we met it! Our soldiers clubbed their muskets, and pressing forward, met horseman and footman, Bedouin and Abdala, sheikh and emir, breast to breast and hand to hand, all mingling in wild *mêlée*, yet not without maintaining some order in their ranks.

This conflict was too furious to last long; yet, while it endured, old Nouredin was the most conspicuous of the assailants. Believing himself fortified against all mortal weapons, by a *drop* of the water of life, he came on like a lion, brandishing his mace, with his quick eyes full of fire, his nostrils dilated, and his thick beard bristling under his chin.

"On—on!" he cried; "Paradise is beneath the shadow of you, swords! On—on; the spirit of the Kafirs will be confounded, *ak.* we shall reap a red harvest of their heads! To their dim eyes your number, O true believers, appears treble! On—on, for we cannot be defeated; Heaven will send to your assistance, O Yemenees, legions of angels, like those who descended to the battle of Bedr; for, lo! there is no religion but Islam! On—on; if ye fear the fire of the Franks, how shall ye face the fire of hell? On—on; Allah Ackbar! fight against the children of sin, for the stratagems of their fathers are weak as smoke. Alijannah, O true believers, Alijannah! Kill—kill! They eat swine; they drink wine; they cast lots and blow on cords; their faces are black; they are the fathers of cats and all uncleanness!"

"La Allah-il-Allah!" cried Mohamed the Emir, as his lance pierced even a rear-rank man.

"Mahmouda resoul Allah!" added Ibn Kogia and all his followers, with one tremendous shout, while the aged santon, who seemed to be endued with the strength of Antares (the Arab Hercules, who, fable sayeth, slew eight hundred men in one battle), actually laid a hand on our regimental colours, and brandished his mace above the head of poor Popkins, whose fortunes and flute-playing had assuredly ended there together, had not my servant Buff rushed forward, and with the butt-end of his musket dealt Nouredin a blow which knocked the last of his teeth and a mouthful of beard down his throat together. He fell backward; a shot from the fusil of a Sepoy struck him in the spine, and extinguished for ever the Lamp of Religion.

Rendered furious by the santon's fall, Mohamed continued to press upon us, and with his long lance made frantic attempts to reach Langley, whom he recognised in the ranks, and who, beyond a doubt, must have been slain, but for the noble manner in which "the Queen's Own" closed around him.

"Come from among thy fellows, thou robber of my sister, and, *Allah ho Akbar*, may our meeting be fortunate!" cried the fiery emir. "On, on, my children of Ishmael; we laugh to scorn those beardless Kafirs—on, in the name of the only Prophet! The black-browed girls of Paradise, with green scarfs around their slender waists and bosoms whiter than the snows of Kaf, long for us! Oh happy, thou Nouredin, who already tastest of the joys that await the brave and true!"

"D—n that fellow," cried O'Hara; "front rank, there—shampec him with the butts of your muskets, some of you."

Buff had again clubbed his firelock, when Langley seized his arm; but at that moment a shot from a corporal named Boyle pierced the proud heart of the emir, and he sank from his velvet saddle, stone dead, on the heap below.

"Poor Mohamed!" exclaimed Langley; "I would fain have spared him for the sake of the orphan Amina."

His faithful follower, Kior Ibn Kogia, was slain almost at the same moment, as he lamented over his wounded horse—his favourite Gazelle, and their red blood mingled together in the gutter of the street. There also fell that honest old warrior Abu Jahl, who, confident in his steel cap and tippet of mail, which were engraved with charms, and strong in the belief of seven potent talismans, which were bound about his sword arm, strove hard to avenge on me the affront I had put upon the voluptuary, his mistress; and he died like the rest, with his hand on his sabre, his face to the enemy, and the splendours of Paradise opening to his view.

On perceiving this slaughter, the old Sheikh Abdumelik, though brave as a Janissary, Mahmoud Ali Badr, Jaffer the Abdala, and the Sheikh or Sultan Ahmed of the Futhalis, fairly turned and fled. As the latter dashed off at full gallop, through a dense mob of the imaum's swarthy matchlockmen, he turned round in his saddle, and aided by the last gleam of the burning mosque, drew his bow, and, like a Parthian of other times, shot an arrow which pinned to the earth Sergeant Edmond, of my company, and slew him.

A general flight now took place; the imaum's horse-guard, his matchlockmen, his camel artillerists, the spearmen of Kaa-el-Bun, the wild Abdali, and the more barbarous Bedouins and Futhalis, all mingled together in one indiscriminate mass of fugitives, and riding or treading each other down, fled by the only clear avenue from the maidaun, a street to the westward, abandoning to our victorious soldiers the city of Sana, and leaving in our hands the sacred person of the imaum, as well as his two consecrated standards.

This was just about the breaking of the dawn.

I will not attempt to describe the aspect of the corpse-encumbered maidaun, or the avenues which led to it, and the scenes of uproar that followed, as musket shots and musket butts were freely applied to every lockfast door and place, and our soldiers roved as they pleased—through dwelling-house and mosque, bezestien and bazaar, and overhauled many a secluded *anderun*; neither will I dwell on the repulsive aspect of the dead, or the agonies of the wounded, to whom Splint and his assistants attended just where they lay, and replaced by lint bandages the slices of raw horse and camel flesh which the Arabs were applying to bayonet stabs and sword cuts. The moment the conflict was fairly over, and we were in complete possession of the town, I sprang from my company to O'Hara, obtained leave to return to the camp with a small party, and hastened away to rejoice my rescued Cecil.

In this affair only one officer and about a hundred of our men were killed and wounded; but there were five times that number of the enemy, whose powder-magazine and principal mosque we destroyed, seizing or spiking at the same time all their guns, which were very old. Thus we succeeded in completely humbling the Corner Stone of the House of Wisdom, the tyrannical old Imaum Solyman, and giving him a lesson which did him infinite good. We made our own terms with him, and marching back to Aden by Damar, Abb, and Jennade, have never since been molested by him or his people.

CHAPTER XCV.

CONCLUSION.

REMOVED to other scenes, where kind friends surrounded her, Cecil soon recovered from all she had endured; though, for a time, I was frequently alarmed by the earnest expression, and wild dilation of her eyes, when she gazed on me; and then a terrible fear would come over my heart, lest past events might have injured her understanding; but, by the blessing of Providence, this proved to be merely a false impression.

Recent occurrences had given her such an unconquerable aversion for Arabia, and all connected with it, that some time elapsed before she could endure and learn to love poor little Amina, who was, indeed, loveable as a child; but months rolled on, and the summer saw them grow unto each other like two sisters, and Cecil learned to laugh at her first interview with the emir's sister in her tent at Sana, when she shrunk back with aversion.

"Oh! it is an Arab!" she exclaimed, and, shuddering, closed her eyes. Then said Amina,

"Why do you shrink from me, Frankish lady? I am a poor girl,

who love you very much. Look at me—I am not ugly—I am not base; my brother is a brave emir—Oh, love me! Kiss poor Amina, and she will be as your sister."

* * * * *

I hasten now with pleasure to another scene.

It is a beautiful evening, and the arid promontory of Aden, with its deep blue bay, its hard white sands and caverned rocks are bathed in the warm light of a western sun—the glorious sun of Arabia Felix; the whole gulf, where its waters blend into the Indian Sea, are rolling their waves in saffron light. The towers of the Turkish wall, the stupendous peaks of Ad, the redoubt of Dhurub-el-Hosh, the minarets of the ruined mosque, the British cantonments, and the old tomb of the Sheikh Eidruse, with its dome and colonnade, under which he sleeps with five of his turbaned descendants, all laid with their feet towards Mecca, are gilded by that beautiful sun; and the Simalee fishermen, who yet adhere to the ancient Sabæan faith, are adoring it as their god of light and heat, while offering up a black-cock's blood with the smoke of fragrant incense.

It is evening in Aden.

A numerous and animated group of British soldiers are crowding on Steamer Point, among the Arab fishermen and coalheavers, sellers of ginger beer, Parsees, Jews, and Simalees, who usually throng it; the soldiers are all men of "the Queen's Own," and they wave their forage caps, and give three hearty cheers, as the *Eugenie*, one of the Oriental Steam Navigation Company's most magnificent ships, rapidly leaves the pier with the black smoke rolling from her funnel over head, and her gigantic paddles ploughing up the shining sea below, as the helmsman turns her gilded prow towards the straits of Bab-el-Mandib.

Amid that showy and fashionable throng upon the poop, who warmly responded to the hearty farewell—the honest British cheer of those who are left so far behind—are two young ladies, whose white marriage bonnets, and white virgin flowers, declare them brides; and one of these, whose deep black eyes and wavy hair bespeak her Eastern origin, is weeping as she hangs upon her husband's arm, while the other, as she clasps her hands upon the arm of him she had so lately vowed to love with her whole heart, is gazing upon the shining water and the receding shore, with a quiet but dreamy smile upon her sweet war face, as if, like one acquainted long with sorrow, she were mentally pondering whether her happiness was complete, and that she was indeed bidding adieu to the scene of so many woes for ever.

The reader will easily recognise these four, who are thus happily and auspiciously commencing the overland route for Britain.

I have omitted to describe the nuptial ceremony performed by a stray missionary on his way to Bombay, the jovial supper, the ball given by the right good fellows of the garrison on the occasion of the double marriage and our parting from them on leave of absence;

how the red whiskered Dreghorn and O'Hara gave the brides away; how one "came out" in a Scotch reel, and the other in an Irish jig, with the thermometer at 104 in the shade; how our band performed, what O'Flannigan styled "soft barbarian airs," in honour of Fred's black-eyed bride; and how Popkins on the flute achieved the "Araby Maid," to his own entire satisfaction; or how the last mute and distant wave of the caps on Steamer Point made a sad chord vibrate in my heart, as I left my old regiment, *the gallant Queen's Own*, so far behind me.

The steamer sped on, and Aden's splintered peaks soon melted into the darkening evening sea.

Next morning the straits of Bab-el-Mandib opened before us; on our larboard bow rose the Isle of Perim, where an old grey stone marks the grave of my countryman, Captain Bower, of Kincaldrum, buried there sixty years ago; and then the wedge-like rocks of Ras Bab-el-Mandib rose upon the starboard; the ocean was tinted with purple and yellow, while the shores were saffron and green.

The high land of Africa and the peak of Assab were visible as we left the black and rugged Cape of Burials far astern.

Through the Gate of Tears the rising sun shone joyously with a new and wonderous glory as we passed in, and steamed proudly and joyously up the bright morning waters of the Red Sea, on the high road to our homes.

THE END.

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